

**DEATH RITUALS AMONG THE KARANGA OF NYAJENA,
ZIMBABWE: PRAXIS, SIGNIFICANCE, AND CHANGES**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject

Religious Studies

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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OCTOBER 2020

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DEATH RITUALS AMONG THE KARANGA OF NYAJENA, ZIMBABWE: PRAXIS, SIGNIFICANCE, AND CHANGES

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I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



SIGNATURE

23 October 2020

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the Karanga of Nyajena, Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to wholeheartedly thank all the following:

- The University of South Africa for an opportunity to pursue PhD studies under its supervision and guidance.
- My supervisor, Rev. Dr. Elijah Elijah Ngoweni Dube for his timeous, insightful, and encouraging feedback and guidance during the research and writing of this thesis.
- Prof. Ismail Jaffer, Chair of the Department Religious Studies and Arabic.
- UNISA College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee for granting me the permission to carry out the research for this project.
- Prof. Auwais Rafudeen, Department of Religious Studies & Arabic, and Research Ethics Committee Member.
- Dr. Fiona Ferris, Deputy Chairperson of the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee.
- Research Participants, for trusting me and sharing what they knew about Karanga death rituals.
- Elizondo Library at the Mexican American Catholic College, and the J. E and L. E. Mabee Library, at the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas, for permitting me to use their resources, particularly the Interlibrary Loan Facility.
- My family—Blessing, Nyasha, and Mufaro, for all the support that they rendered me.

SUMMARY OF THESIS

This study was about death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena, Masvingo, Zimbabwe, who are a sub-group of the Shona people. This inquiry's primary purpose was tripartite in outlook. First, it described the Karanga causes of sickness and death, and Karanga death rituals. Second, it explored the significance of these rituals to the Karanga people. Third, the study traced and identified the changes in the practice and significance of some of the rituals. The overall goal of this inquiry was to compose a brief manual for the performance of some of the Karanga death rituals. The inquiry divided the Karanga death rituals into three major categories, namely, pre-burial rituals, burial rituals, and post-burial rituals. The investigation employed qualitative research traditions, particularly ethnography, in the collection and interpretation of the relevant research data, in pursuit of the goals mentioned above. Postcolonial theory was used to give a theoretical framework to this study. This study was necessitated by the need of a written manual on the performance of Karanga death rituals. The study compiled the participants' narratives concerning the praxis, meaning, and changes in the Karanga death rituals in an attempt to analyze and write them down for posterity. The inquiry found out that although the praxis of the rituals was still remembered by many Karanga people, some of them were no longer performed, and their significance had been lost. Although the study acknowledged the inevitable dynamism of culture, it held that every ethnicity should have some cultural or religious constants so that its identity is not lost. Hence, the Karanga of Nyajena should retrace their footsteps back to their death rituals in order to rediscover and reaffirm their battered cultural identity and integrity.

KEY WORDS

**African Traditional Religion; Rituals; Karanga/Shona Religion; Cultural Change;
Avenging Spirits; Sickness; The Karanga of Nyajena; Death; Ancestors; Death Rituals;
Manual; Witchcraft; Embalming**

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GLOSSARY LIST

Amasvina — derogatory term used for Shona peoples

Ashaika — (literally), he or she has disappeared (he or she has died)

Atisiya — (literally), he or she has left us (he or she has died)

Atungamira — (literally), he or she has gone before us (he or she has died)

Azorora — (literally), he or she has rested (he or she has died)

Bandauko — foreleg of an animal

Bembera — threatening to reveal the name of the witch at a village meeting

Bvuri — shadow

Bwanyanza — bier made of two poles and tree bark

Chema — death token or gift

Chibako — ground tobacco container

Chibwe — a pebble

Chidzva — hind leg of an animal, or thigh

Chifumuro — a herb used to treat a variety of diseases, and also to ward off evil spirits

Chimutsamapfihwa — young sister or niece of a deceased married woman given to the deceased's husband as a wife

Chiremba — traditional or Western medical practitioner or healer

Chiropa — liver

Chirungu — modernity (Westernization)

Chityu — chest of an animal

Chizhuzhu — *confeti* tree used to expose witches or witchcraft

Demo — axe

Divi — side

Divisi — witchcraft used to increase one's agricultural produce using mysterious means

Doro remvura — ritual that is performed a few weeks after burial at which beer is given to the undertakers to quench their thirst, and to thank them for their manual contribution during the burial

Dota kudota — ashes to ashes

Duri nemusi — mortar and pestle used to pound grains to remove chaff

Dzivaguru — a praise name given to God by the Shona, which acknowledges his responsibility of providing rain

Fodya yemhino — ground tobacco, which is sniffed

Gambe — a big piece of a broken clay pot used to roast peanuts or to bury premature babies

Gata/mashopeshope — the consultation of a diviner particularly to find out the cause of a relative's death, and how the *magadziro* should be performed

Goritoto — ghost

Gumbwa — consultation of a diviner by all the adults of a village to identify a witch who would have bewitched a sick villager

Guru — tripe, or lining of an animal's stomach

Guruva kuguruva — dust to dust

Gwatata — pancreas

Hakata — bones or wooden objects used by diviners help them to explain things

Hakuchina — literally, he or she is no more, (he or she has died)

Hari — clay pot

Hazvieri — small bush whose leaves are used to purify people and objects

Ivhu — soil

Jira guru — large blanket or piece of cloth

Karanga — one of the ethnicities of the Shona people of Zimbabwe whose traditional rural home is Masvingo province

Katanda botso — a shaming ritual performed by the perpetrator to appease the spirit of his deceased mother who would have died aggrieved

Kubata mavoko — a ritual in which mourners greet the family of the deceased to commiserate with them for their loss

Kubata nhumbi — a ritual to purify the personal belongings of the deceased before they are distributed to the qualifying relatives

Kubwereketa — Karanga word that means to talk

Kuchenura — to purify or cleanse

Kucheuka — to look back

Kufa — to die

Kugara nhaka — to inherit the property or wife of the deceased

Kugeza — to wash or bath

Kugeza mufi — to wash the corpse

Kugova fuma — to distribute the deceased's estate

Kugova nhaka — see *kugova fuma*

Kugova nhumbi — to distribute the deceased's personal belongings

Kuwungudza — to wail as a sign of deep grief

Kukanda chibwe — to place a pebble on top of a grave while introducing oneself to the deceased

Kukwegura — growing old

Kupeta — to fold, particularly the legs and arms of the corpse

Kupfekedza mufi — to clothe the deceased

Kupisa — to burn

Kuradzika chitunha — to lay down the body in the grave

Kurindira — to wait on or watch the dying person

Kurova guva — a ritual performed at least six months after the burial of the dead person to bring his spirit back into his home as an ancestor (also called *magadziro*)

Kusengudza — relocating the dying person

Kushamba — to wash

Kutama — to resettle

Kutara guva — to mark the grave. It is also known as *kutema ruhau*

Kutarira — to look at

Kutema — to cut

Kutiziswa — a type of Shona marriage whereby the girl elopes with the boyfriend

Kutsvaira pabwiro — to sweep around the grave

Kuviga gavamwedzi — to bury a premature baby

Kuvona — to see

Kuwana — to get married

Kuzivisa — to notify

Kuzorodza mufi — to rest the deceased during the procession to the grave

Kuzovona mugwere — a visit to the sick person, which is expected of all relatives

Mafuta eshato — python fat

Magadziro — a ritual performed at least six months after the burial of the dead person to bring him back into his home as an ancestor. It is the same as *kurova guva*

Mahakurimwi — mandatory rest in honor of the deceased, usual for less than a week

Makate — huge clay containers used to process and store beer

Mamhepo — evil spirits

Manenji/mashura — misfortunes that may happen to a family member who has not been notified of the death of a close relative

Manyaradzo — a Christian ritual to commiserate the death of a person

Mapapu — lungs

Maperembudzi — leprosy

Mashavi — alien spirits that seek recognition among unrelated people

Masukafoshoro — a ritual to cleanse the tools of the gravediggers, and also to thank them for their job. It is also called *doro remvura*

Masukavuta — a ritual where the nephew of the deceased washes or cleanses one of the weapons of the deceased to prepare for the jumping of the weapon ritual. In the past, the weapon was mostly a bow and arrow

Matombo — stones or rocks

Mavhitori — derogatory term used for the Karanga people derived from the colonial name of the present-day town called Masvingo—Fort Victoria.

Mazango — medicinal waistband used to ward off evil spirits and a variety of misfortunes

Mbabvu — ribs

Mbanda — Karanga indigenous “incense” used to drive away evil spirits or to purify the air

Mbudzi — goat

Mhondi — murderer

Mhondoro — clan ancestral spirit (ancestral spirit of a chief), usually symbolized by a lion

mhumba — heart

Mhururu — ululation or rhythmic sound made by the rapid movement of the tongue in and out of the mouth

Mhutsashungu — a goat sacrificed to appease an ancestor who would have died aggrieved

Moyo — heart, or totem of the Vajena and several other Shona clans

Muchakata — *Parinari curatellifolia*. An indigenous sacred fruit tree. (Also called *muhacha*)

Mudzimu — ancestor

Mukadzi ane mimba — a pregnant woman

Mukombe — a container made from wood or gourd, which is used to fetch water or beer

Mukwambo — son-in-law

Munhu — person

Mupembere — Velvet leaved *Combretum* whose branch is used to bring back the ancestor from the grave

Muposo — type of witchcraft placed in the way of the victim

Muroyi — witch

Murume — man

Musana — a person or animal's back

Museredzero — wash down

Mushozhowa — *Pseudolachnostylis maprouneifolia* (small tree used for rituals)

Musikavanhu — Shona praise name for God depicting his creation of humanity

Musvisvinwa — a bush used to purify the air

Mutarara — *Gardenia thunbergia* (a tree that is believed to drive away evil spirits and people)

Mutimwi — medicinal waistband made of a piece of cloth and herbs

Mutsago — pillow

Mutsipa — neck

Muvonde — fig tree

Muzeze — an indigenous tree whose leaves are used to sprinkle sacred water

Muzukuru — nephew/niece or grandson/granddaughter

Mveva — fruit of a sausage tree

Mwari — God

N'anga — traditional medical practitioner

Nevanji/dangwe — male first born of a chief/male first born

Ngozi — avenging spirit

Nhaka — inheritance

Nhungamiri — a goat or cow/ox slaughtered for the mourners

Nhunzwi — a female goat that has given birth to kids

Njodzi — hazard or death

Norwa — male goat

Pfuko — small to medium clay container used to store beer

Rufu — death

Rugumudzambwa — herb used for purification

Kutema ruhau — marking the grave

Rukanda — ritual bangle extracted from the foreleg of the sacrificial bull, and worn on the wrist of the oldest son like a bangle

Rukweza — rapoko (small red grain used for food and brewing beer)

Rupasa — reed mat

Ruredzo — (*decerocaryum zanguebarium*) a vine like, slippery wild plant

Sadunhu — headman

Sadza — staple food for Zimbabweans made from maize meal and boiled water. Also known as *ugali* or *nzima*, by other African peoples

Sahwira — best friend

Sendekavuta — a ritual where the man who would have inherited the deceased's wife makes it public

Shona — one of the main composite ethnicities found in Zimbabwe

Tsikamutanda — itinerant diviner who specializes in identifying and exorcizing witches

Vadzimu — ancestors

Vajena — the people of Nyajena (members of the aristocracy)

Vakwambo — sons-in-law. Also known as *vakwasha*

Vanhu — people

Varoora — daughters-in-law

Vazukuru — nephews/nieces or grandchildren

Vura — intestines

Vuroyi — witchcraft

Vuta nemuseve — bow and arrow

Wafa wanaka — idiom, which means the dead has become good

Zita — name

Zvidhoma/zvitupwani — evil spirits that may appear in the form of small children and are used by witches to beat up their victims

Zvisasa — ringworm

Zviyo — rapoko

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERALL BEARINGS OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental existential truths with which humans must grapple is the fact that no one lives forever. Kübler-Ross (1975: 5) aptly observes that “Dying is an integral part of life, as natural and predictable as being born.” Despite the inevitability and naturality of death, some, if not most people fear it. Choron (1964: 73–79) postulates that there are about three varieties of the fear of death, namely, the fear of what happens after death, the fear of the event of dying, and the fear of ceasing to be. For me, it seems that the greatest impediment to embracing the reality of dying is the unavailability of scientifically verifiable knowledge of what happens beyond death.

Despite the uncertainties and mysteries surrounding what happens in the hereafter, many religious and secular traditions of the world believe that the deceased acquire some kind of supernatural powers that may be either beneficial or hazardous to the living, depending on the appropriateness of the death rituals carried out, and the deceased’s pre-death compliance with other social qualifications, as determined by each people’s cultural heritage. Hence, death rituals must be performed meticulously to avoid infuriating the dead, whose displeasure may bring

some kind of retribution upon their living family members and the communities in which they live. For the Karanga of Nyajena, in Zimbabwe's Province of Masvingo South, perhaps just like in many other African traditional societies, these death rituals are not written down, and consequently, some of them, and their significance might have been lost, or are at the verge of extinction due to the passage of time and other irresistible forces of social and cultural change such as colonialism. Colonialism and its effects on African people will be explored in detail later in this chapter.

This study focused on the Karanga of Nyajena, popularly known as Vajena, a name which can be understood in two different ways. First, the term Vajena refers to the people of Nyajena in general, popularly known as *vanhu vekwaNyajena* (people of Nyajena). Second, Vajena refers to a specific group of people who live in Nyajena, who belong to the totem of Moyo, Murambwi of Vajena. The latter meaning is the most conventional among the people of Nyajena. The Vajena belong to the aristocracy, and Nyajena is their clan. Their cultural identity is explored in detail in a subsequent section. All other people who live in Nyajena might have come there because of intermarriages or migrations, and most of them are related to the Vajena in one way or the other. This study focused on all people living in Nyajena (*vanhu vekwaNyajena*), irrespective of their totems. Hence, throughout this study, the terms Karanga of Nyajena, Shona, or even Africans, are used instead of Vajena, to avoid confusion. Since the Karanga are a sub-group of the Shona people, wherever applicable, the name Shona will be used instead of Karanga. Since Vajena are Karanga, and Karanga are Shona, and the Shona are Africans, it should be noted that the term Africans is also employed where the phenomena that can safely be applied to most Africans are being discussed.

This inquiry's primary purpose was tripartite in outlook. First, the study described Karanga death rituals now and then. This description included the causes of sickness and death, and death rituals among the Karanga. Second, the research aimed at exploring and examining Karanga death rituals' significance to the Karanga of Nyajena. Third, the study traced and identified any cultural changes that have happened to some Karanga death rituals due to various transformational compulsions such as colonialism and the passage of time. The overall goal of this study was to compose a brief manual for Karanga death rituals as remembered by the Karanga of Nyajena, and as recorded by earlier studies, and observed by this researcher. The investigation employed qualitative research traditions, particularly ethnography, in the collection and interpretation of the relevant research data, in pursuit of the goals mentioned above.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS

A (research) problem has been defined conventionally by Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 76–78) as “a matter involving doubt, uncertainty, or difficulty,” that perplexes and teases the mind into an exploration of the matter that is intended to find a “solution, some clarification, or decision” to the matter. The problem that this study endeavored to explore concerned the death rituals of the Karanga of Nyajena, which young generations are likely to forget if they are not written down and archived. The Karanga of Nyajena, like any other ethnic group, have their own death rituals, whose fundamental purpose is to placate and assist the spirit of the deceased to enter the ancestral realm, and to help the surviving family members in coming to grips with the loss of their beloved ones. All Karanga death rituals must be performed scrupulously to avoid dire

consequences to both the deceased's spirit and the living members of the family. If the rituals are not performed properly, that can disturb the smooth transition of the deceased into an ancestor or any other benevolent spirit.

Unfortunately, the Karanga death rituals are orally handed down from one generation to the next, and consequently, no fixed written record of how they were and are supposed to be performed is available. This unavailability of written Karanga death rituals is problematic, for it may result in some aspects of the rituals being forgotten, lost, or changed, and in that process, depriving the Karanga posterity of its life-giving traditions. Even in areas where a substantial transformation or loss of Karanga death rituals might not have been experienced, there is still a danger that sooner or later, some of them may be lost. Hence, this study attempted to go as far back into the past of the Karanga people as possible to unearth and compile their death rituals, examine their significance, then and now, identify the changes that might have happened to some of these rituals, and compose a manual.

During data gathering, three questions were central to this study: 1. What were or are the Karanga death rituals as practiced by the Karanga of Nyajena? 2. What were or are their significance to the people of Nyajena? 3. Are there any changes in the practice and understanding of these rituals? These questions were expanded as follows:

1.2.1 Pre-burial Rituals

1.3.1.1 Describe the Karanga traditional causes of sickness and death?

1.3.1.2 Describe the Karanga pre-burial rituals that were/are performed from the time someone is terminally ill, up to just before the corpse is taken out for burial.

1.3.1.3 What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?

1.3.1.4 Has any of these rituals changed?

1.2.2 Burial Rituals

1.3.2.1 Describe the Karanga burial rituals, from the time the body is carried out of the house for burial until it is finally laid to rest.

1.3.2.2 What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?

1.3.2.3 Has any of these rituals changed?

1.2.3 Post-burial Rituals

1.3.3.1 Describe the Karanga post-burial rituals?

1.3.3.2 What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?

1.3.3.3 Has any of these rituals changed?

The underlying assumption to these questions was that although culture is dynamic, there are cultural constants, and that the participants would be able to describe the traditional outlook of these rituals, and identify any changes that could have happened to any of them. One of the outcomes of this study would be the documentation of the Karanga death rituals to conserve them for future generations. In addition to that, if the rituals were recorded, any future changes would always be identifiable, and perhaps justifiable. Also, the findings of the probe would give

the Karanga future generations the option either to follow the traditional or Westernized rituals, or both.

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Several years ago, I attended a funeral of a relative who had died in a traffic accident, at one of the villages in my rural home of Nyajena, in Masvingo. The deceased had instructed his family that he wished to be buried according to Karanga death rituals since he was not a Christian. As the relatives were preparing for his burial, the nuclear family members of the deceased and other mourners realized that the elders who were expected to act as ritual practitioners had failed to turn up, and those who were present, lacked sufficient expertise of performing some of the required Karanga death rituals. The family members asked the local Church of Christ pastor who was among the mourners to preside over the burial rituals. Since the deceased was not a member of the Church of Christ (although his wife was), the pastor reluctantly agreed to preside over the burial rituals but on one condition—that he would perform the funeral rites his own way—the Christian way. The family of the deceased declined the pastor's offer, fearing to offend the spirit of the deceased.

In fits and starts, one of the available elders officiated the grave-side burial rituals. As the rituals progressed, it increasingly appeared that, apart from having no adequate know-how of the death rituals to be carried out, the presider did not understand why some rituals had to be performed. For instance, as the body was being transported from the hut to the grave, numerous kinds of disagreements occurred, and the sacred practitioner could not resolve them satisfactorily. First,

the mourners disagreed on the number of times the corpse was supposed to be rested before reaching the burial place. Some said three times, and others argued that it was not necessary to rest the body since the day was almost gone. Second, one young man was challenged for carrying two stones to the grave at the same time, and he wanted to know why it was tabooed, but no one could respond to his query convincingly. Third, as the body was being lowered into the grave, there was a heated debate concerning the direction to which the deceased was supposed to face. Again, the ritual leader could not competently resolve the contention.

Eventually, the burial was completed, but I left the funeral very sad, and perhaps other mourners felt the same too. It seemed that our people had forgotten their Karanga ways of sending off the dead. Logically, a people that does not remember how to perform its rituals is likely to lose its cultural identity and integrity. This incident generated in me the assumption on which this investigation is built that human minds have a proclivity to forget or change procedures. These disagreements could have been avoided or minimized if a written document of the Karanga death rituals existed. I realized that the absence of a Karanga burial rites manual or written document worsened the situation. Since most Karanga people contend that the dead must be rendered befitting burial rituals, and that, failure to do so has adverse consequences for the living relatives, a written document of these rituals can reduce the number of mistakes that may be committed, and the disagreements concerning the praxis of burial.

1.4. JUSTIFICATION

The fact that culture is dynamic is incontestable. Even if some people would desperately want to keep their traditions as they were in the past, some of those traditions are bound to change.

Among the Karanga of Nyajena, cultural dynamism has been exacerbated by several factors.

First, whenever two or more cultures meet, there is bound to be an exchange of cultural ideas and practices, which is called acculturation. Gittins (2015: 59) has accurately noted that “Virtually no culture today exists in complete isolation, so culture-contact is a universal social fact, accelerated by the internet and associated technologies.” Kim (2014: 11) has argued that this inevitable cultural dynamism can be either positive or negative. The cultural encounter becomes counterproductive if one culture is completely overpowered by the other to the extent of having its adherents beginning to lose their cultural identity and integrity. Seemingly, that is what is happening to some of the death rituals of the Karanga of Nyajena.

Second, the Karanga of Nyajena have no written documents and rubrics of their death rituals.

There is a need to compile and preserve the Karanga death rituals for posterity by providing a written document to those who would want a source of reference. In addition to that, every person is entitled to know the reasons for performing the rituals that society deems obligatory or necessary. Since burial rituals are mandatory, and should be “performed appropriately and efficiently,” as Shoko (2007: 86) has observed, a written record of the rituals will aid the memories of those who would have forgotten how to perform them. In every culture, the surest method of protecting the traditions of a people is to write them down before they are lost, changed, or distorted. This work intends to do just that.

Third, some of the young Karanga people have converted to other religious traditions, which forbid them to participate in Karanga death rituals actively and publicly. For instance, some Christian denominations demonize the Karanga rituals and compel their adherents to discard them. The most significant challenge that some of these Christianized Karanga people encounter is the expectation by some of the communities that they should sometimes bury their departed relatives according to Karanga traditions, and therefore, should know the process and significance of such rituals. A written document may be of great help to them if they found themselves in a situation where they are pressurized to follow the Karanga traditional death rituals.

Fourth, some young people have been influenced by the forces of modernity brought about by colonialism to despise and forgo some Karanga customs. Some of these customs are criticized for being archaic and uncivilized since they do not conform with forces of modernity. The Karanga learn rituals during their performance. Although every relative who can, should attend the funeral of a deceased family member, this required attendance may not be good enough to convince some people of the value of the death rituals that they participate in. It is difficult to learn something by heart if you do not give any importance to it. A written document would give such people some knowledge of their traditions even if they opt not to practice them. At times, people disagree with certain beliefs and rituals not because they know much about them, but because they know very little.

Fifth, death comes whenever it wants, for it does not have a schedule. This sporadic occurrence of death makes death rituals mere crisis rituals, which are performed infrequently. This irregular happening of death makes it difficult even for those who attend funerals regularly to learn the appropriate ritual procedures. More so, when death strikes, some family members, may not be able to attend the funeral, so they are excluded in the learning process. Both the infrequent occurrence of death and the failure to attend the death rituals when it happens by some family members prevent some people from acquiring the knowledge of the rituals, particularly their significance.

Finally, although some studies of death rituals have been carried out among other Shona ethnic groups, such as the Budya, Korekore, and Manyika, not much research has been done on death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena. Michael Gelfand, one of the few and earliest researchers to study the Karanga of Nyajena (1962), only dealt with death rites in passing, for his main objective was to explore the spirits of Nyajena. To complement his efforts, this study intended to survey the praxis, significance, and possible changes in the death rituals of the Karanga people in order to record them for future generations. The availability of a written document of the Karanga of Nyajena death rituals would give mourners and the bereaved a source of reference. Since the people of Nyajena share many rituals with other Shona ethnic groups, the outcome of this study is likely to benefit most Shona ethnic groups.

1.5 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018: 117), the purpose statement of a study presents the researcher's reasons for wanting to carry out the study, and what he intends to accomplish by so doing. It has also been defined by Creswell and Poth (2018:326) as a "road map" to the whole study. In addition to that, "a good qualitative purpose statement contains information about the central phenomenon explored in the study, the participants in the study, and the research site," (Creswell, 2009: 112).

The purpose of this study was to explore the Karanga death rituals with the intent to describe them, understand their significance, identify any changes that might have occurred, and to provide a resource or manual to the people who would like to bury their beloved ones according to the Karanga traditional way. The availability of such a death rituals rubric is likely to inculcate some appreciation and knowledge of how to perform the rituals since they are crucial for the future of both the deceased persons' spirits and the living members of their families. This knowledge is likely to empower posterity in safeguarding the rituals against extinction, and encouraging young generations to uphold them. The Karanga death rituals were explored under three categories: pre-burial rituals, burial rituals, and post-burial rituals.

The study used qualitative research, particularly ethnography to explore these rituals. The type of ethnography that was used will be explored in detail later. Fifteen participants were selected for their expertise and experience in Karanga death rituals. The terms, interviewees, respondents, respondents, and participants were used interchangeably throughout this report. The study used

convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling in identifying the participants. These methods of data collection will be elaborated below. The researcher visited the interviewees in their own homes or workplaces to either interview or observe them. It should be noted that this study was limited to the Karanga of Nyajena, in Masvingo.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This inquiry's primary objectives were tripartite in outlook. First, the study aimed at exploring and describing Karanga death rituals. The second objective of the inquiry was the identification of the described rituals' traditional and current significance to both Karanga individuals and their communities. The third objective was to unearth any changes that could have happened to Karanga death rituals due to various transformational compulsion. All these objectives were intended to culminate in the composition of a manual of the Karanga death rituals as they are remembered and practiced by the people of Nyajena. The investigation employed qualitative research traditions, particularly ethnography, in the collection and interpretation of the relevant research data, in pursuit of the objectives mentioned above. Places, events, and sites to carry out the investigation were identified by the researcher. Karanga ritual practitioners were identified and interviewed, and their descriptions were either tape recorded and then transcribed or written down as notes.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Every research needs a research methodology, which gives the researcher guidelines on how to interact with, gather, and interpret data. A research methodology gives direction to the study as if it were a Global Positioning System (GPS). It gives the study boundary lines within which to explore the topic in question. This study employed qualitative research methodology to explore Karanga death rituals as will be explained below.

1.7.1 Qualitative Research Methodology

This study employed the qualitative research methodology, which Creswell (1998: 24) has defined as, “involving fieldwork for prolonged periods, collecting words and pictures, analyzing this information inductively while focusing on participant views, and writing about the process using expressive and persuasive language.” Generally, qualitative research methodology includes several research designs, such as phenomenology, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, ethnography, qualitative case study, and mixed methods research. However, this study utilized ethnography. Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 15–18) postulate that qualitative researchers, as “primary instruments of data collection,” focus on meaning and understanding of the issue under investigation to build “concepts, hypotheses, or theories,” inductively and descriptively. Hence, researchers should possess a particular level of competency, such as curiosity, tolerance for ambiguity, attentive observation, asking right questions, reasoning inductively, and tolerance for writing. It should be noted that a research methodology is different from a research method in that a research method is a constituent or tool, such as qualitative research interviews used to

gather data as dictated by the research methodology. These will be discussed in a subsequent section.

This study employed ethnography, which involves a “description, and interpretation, of a cultural or social group or system” to understand the meanings of behavior, language, or cultural interactions as noted by Creswell, (1998: 58). It also incorporated participant observation, which DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 1) define as “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture.” Davies (1999: 67) contends that “In its classic form participant observation consists of a single researcher spending an extended period of time (usually at least a year) living among the people he or she is studying, participating in their daily lives in order to gain as complete an understanding as possible of the cultural meanings and social structures of the group and how these are interrelated.” Be that as it may, cultural anthropologists concur that the immersion period can be significantly shortened if one studies his own culture, which was the case in this study.

According to Davies (1999: 67), participant observation as a research strategy became the hallmark or “rite of passage” for anthropologists, and can be traced back to Bronislaw Malinowski, a British anthropologist who found himself trapped on the Trobriand Islands during the First World War, where he discovered or developed the research strategy. Its primary objective is to give the researcher an insider’s perspective on the issues under investigation. Ethnography incorporates interviews, documents, observation, the use of key respondents, and other qualitative research strategies.

1.7.1.1 Strengths of Qualitative Research

As has been mentioned above, this study used qualitative research methods for collecting and analyzing data. One of the advantages of qualitative research is its holistic approach to issues under investigation. According to Janesick (1998: 42), “It looks at the large picture, the whole picture, and begins with a search for understanding of the whole.” The other strength of qualitative inquiry is its “richly descriptive nature,” which makes the outcome easier to read and understand, even for non-academic audiences as noted by Merriam and Associates (2002: 5). According to Corbin and Strauss (2008: 14), many qualitative researchers hope that their works would be of relevance to non-academic audiences because of their clarity and intelligibility.

In addition to that, Creswell and Poth (2018: 43) assert that qualitative data are collected at the site “where participants experience the issue or problem under study.” Because of that connection between researchers and the researched, Corbin and Strauss (2008: 12) assert that qualitative research “allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables.” In support of that, Silverman (2000: 2) contends that qualitative research encourages innovativeness by researchers because of its flexibility, for nothing is cast in iron. Creswell and Poth (2018: 44) aptly describes this flexibility as follows: “The questions may change, the forms of data collection may be altered, and the individuals studied, and sites visited may be modified during the process of conducting the study.”

Qualitative research also promotes objectivity, which encourages the qualitative researcher to suspend or set aside “his or her own beliefs, perspective, and presuppositions,” (Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 6). Other scholars, such as Snape and Spencer (2003: 4) refer to this phenomenon as “empathic neutrality, whereby the researcher uses personal insight while taking a non-judgmental stance.” In addition to that, it allows for the use of small samples, which are manageable, whose data can be representative of a larger population. Berg and Lune (2012: 341) hold that “The logic behind this has to do with the fact that few human behaviors are entirely unique, idiosyncratic, and spontaneous.”

Furthermore, Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 6) contend that qualitative inquiry is “naturalistic and unobtrusive” because the interviews are just like normal day to day conversations. Moreover, Creswell and Poth (2018: 43) claim that qualitative research utilizes a variety of data forms such as “interviews, observations, and documents,” that can be used independently or in liaison with each other. On top of that, Janesick (1998: 42) contends that “qualitative design requires the researcher to become the research instrument. As a research instrument, the researcher must have the ability to observe the behavior and must sharpen the skills necessary for observation and face-to-face interviews.” That is why Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 8) insist that qualitative methods are intended to serve the researcher, rather than enslaving her or him to procedure and technique.

The other strength of qualitative research design experienced in this study, involved the subject of this inquiry. Even though death is surrounded by mysteries, and perhaps fears and ignorance, its occurrence is commonplace. Kubler-Ross (1975: x) holds that “Death is a subject that is evaded, ignored, and denied by our youth-worshipping, progress-oriented society. It is almost as if

we have taken on death as just another disease to be conquered. But the fact is that death is inevitable. We will die; it is a matter of time.” Most of the participants, in one way or the other, had a relative who had died, and they had participated in some of the death rituals. These participants’ experiences were valuable to this inquiry. Of course, in qualitative research, every participant’s point of view matters, as affirmed by Merriam and Associates, (2002: 6).

Additionally, this topic generated a lot of interest among elderly respondents since some of them were Karanga ritual practitioners by virtue of their age or position in the family or community. During the interviews, some of them felt that their expertise in death rituals was being affirmed, and their wisdom valued, and appreciated. Moreover, I have personally assisted in burying relatives, and I had observed several Karanga burial rituals before this study. Consequently, I was psychologically prepared for the emotional challenges that might be encountered in a study of this caliber, as noted by Chitakure (2016: 43). Lastly, this topic was pertinent to future generations because death will continue to happen, and the Karanga people will almost always be called upon to bury their dead properly, according to their traditions.

My status as an insider in Nyajena contributed several advantages to this study. I was born and bred in Nyajena, and I am familiar with the topography, demography, context (social, political, and historical), and mentality of the people among whom I carried out my research, which is said to be helpful by Creswell and Poth (2018: 44). Moreover, the area of research was relatively manageable, and almost homogenous in terms of culture. I understood the verbal and signal language of the Karanga of Nyajena, which Chitakure (2016: 41) pronounces as one of the advantages in doing qualitative investigation. I knew how to find gatekeepers to facilitate

relatively easier entrance into sacred spaces. To a certain extent, I am an insider in Karanga religious or cultural traditions, and I possessed most of the advantages that insiders are believed to have when studying their own communities, such as the knowledge of the language, how to establish relationships, and having the interests of the researched people at heart as Bourdillon (1996: 143) has encouraged. Affirming the above claim, Jorgensen (1989: 60–65) has insisted that the inside perspective is critical in participant observation.

1.7.1.2 Weaknesses of the Research

Although qualitative research was ideal for this study, Creswell and Poth (2018: 47) warn researchers that collecting data, verifying, and writing descriptions is “time-consuming and a complex process.” They are right. The process seemed to be never-ending. Also, while the use of small samples was helpful, I was on a constant check for haste and unhelpful generalizations. Furthermore, data analysis using any research methodology is always demanding, and if not done meticulously, it may distort the outcome of the inquiry. For instance, I discovered that data coding was more complicated than just taking note of the notions scribbled inside or outside of the field notes. Corbin and Strauss (2008: 66) were right when they asserted that coding involved “interacting with data (analysis) using techniques such as asking questions about the data, making comparisons between data, and so on, and in doing so, deriving concepts to stand for those data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions.” I realized that Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 130) were spot on when they warned that the recognition of patterns can be hard because of the unavailability of a one size fits all formula for selecting themes and developing concepts.

Qualitative research requires sensitivity from the researcher. Corbin and Strauss (2008: 32) define sensitivity as “having insight, being turned in to, being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings in data. It means being able to present the view of participants and taking the role of the others through immersion in data.” And, this is not always easy to achieve.

In addition to the above weaknesses, a qualitative researcher is warned that he may end up learning more than he had intended to know, (Berg and Lune, 2012: 219). In support of this point, Rubin and Rubin (2005: 100) offer the example of the participants who may be involved in ethically unacceptable or criminal ways. That is the reason every ethnographer should warn or give respondents an opportunity to retract what they would have said or quoting them anonymously if what they are saying may get them into trouble, (Berg and Lune, 2012: 219). To counteract this challenge, I made it clear to the interviewees that they could withdraw from the interview at any moment if they felt that they no longer desired to share their experiences.

More so, some of the qualitative research traditions, such as participant observation requires the physical participation and observation by the researcher, and my ability to do that was limited because of the nature and occurrence of death rituals. Death rituals are impromptu rituals, and as such, are not frequently performed. Consequently, I was able to attend only one funeral and *magadziro* (making of an ancestor ritual). Connected to that Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000: 11, 13) allege that some researchers may be exposed to physical and emotional dangers if they are studying communities in high crime areas, war zones, and infectious diseases, and fortunately, I was never exposed to any danger except the possibility of being bitten by snakes.

Moreover, death is an emotional topic that was likely to invoke emotions in the interviewees, and this could deter some of the respondents from sharing their experiences. The discussion on death rituals, to a small extent, could revive almost healed wounds caused by the loss of respondents' beloved ones since the length of the mourning period is difficult to determine. Genep (1960: 148) has rightly observed that during the period of mourning, social activities are almost adjourned for the bereaved families, "and the length of the period increases with the closeness of the social ties to the deceased." Hence, it was difficult to tell if someone was still mourning a deceased family member or not. Besides, participant observation is somewhat difficult to perform in certain rituals, particularly those that demand the involvement of close relatives only. Furthermore, the "status of insider is not often clear-cut," as Bourdillon (1996:141) has asserted. For Bourdillon (1996: 141), being an insider, has other disadvantages such as taking things for granted, hinderance from personal views, observing what is supposed to happen rather than what does happen, lack of interest and objectivity, among other things. These weaknesses were guarded against throughout the study.

Even though Nyajena is relatively a small area, still it was not easy for me to have all the villages being represented in this study. It is difficult to speak for all the Karanga of Nyajena since death rituals "vary widely among different peoples and that further variations depend on the sex, age, and social position of the deceased," as pointed out by Genep (1960: 146). Also, since most of the road networks have been neglected and rendered impassable, it was difficult to reach some parts of Nyajena. Hence, this study only probed the people who live in accessible areas. In addition to the above setbacks, the Karanga, like any other ethnic group in Zimbabwe, have been affected by acculturation, and some respondents could not remember how and why some rituals

were performed in the past. Although the hunt for people with knowledge of Karanga death rituals was doable, it was not an easy task.

Despite the shortcomings of qualitative inquiry that are explained above, and the challenges surrounding death rituals in Nyajena, qualitative research remained critical to this investigation, and the outcome of the study was fruitful and enlightening. The topic, (death rituals) proved to be pertinent, and the area in which the study was carried out was appropriate. This exploration was carried out objectively and professionally that the reliability and validity of its results are guaranteed.

1.7.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

1.7. 2. 1 Interviews

There are several types of interviews that can be used as research method in qualitative research, such as cultural or ethnography interviews, elite interviews, topical interviews, open-ended interviews, focused interviews, structured interviews, informal and formal interviews, questionnaires, focus group interviews, and online interviews. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 2) state that in qualitative research, interviews are used as tools of research, and intentional ways of learning about people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences. Hence, interviews are a learning method.

Primarily, this study employed cultural or ethnographic interviews. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995: 6), with cultural interviews, researchers want to know more about the shared

understandings of the usually “taken for granted rules of behavior and standards of value, and mutual expectations.” Greater focus was directed to what the participants had learned through such experiences, and what they had successfully passed on to posterity. Culture interviews are also called ethnographic interviews because they focus on culture via the participants’ experiences. Marshall and Rossman (1995: 82) assert that culture interviewers elicit the meanings the people give to events and behaviors, for the purpose of generating a cultural classification. This inquiry focused on descriptions and the significance of death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena as understood by the people who were interviewed. The style of questioning used was relaxed, although some key questions had been preset. Active listening was the greatest tool in this study since participants gave narratives of how particular rituals were or are performed, and what their significance was or is.

Although this study utilized some semi-structured questions, they were used as a guide to direct the interviewees to specific key topics, not as an end in themselves as Robson (1993: 159) has encouraged. There are numerous Karanga death rituals, so there was a need to guide the interviewees to certain areas lest some rituals would be left unattended. Since these were unstructured and semi-structured interviews, I had a plan and guide, open-ended questions, and prompts to guide me. This was in line with Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016: 120) encouragement to researchers to utilize open-ended questions, which they claim to yield more descriptive data and stories about the phenomenon under scrutiny. Even though I had key guiding questions, which all the interviewees were encouraged to answer, responding to all the questions was not mandatory. More questions were generated as conversations progressed.

Elite interviews, which Marshall and Rossman (1995:83) claim to focus on a particular caliber of interviewees, particularly the participants that are considered to be prominent, influential, and well-informed concerning the phenomena that are being studied in a community, were also employed. These participants were chosen because of their expertise in the area of investigation. The assumption was that such participants had more valuable information to share with the interviewer, and had many insights concerning the need for accuracy in giving information. Among the Karanga people, there are ritual practitioners in each family or village. These ritual practitioners possess the knowledge of the rituals of their families or communities. They are the guardians and reservoirs of the traditional knowledge of the Shona people. I assumed that they had the information that I needed for this study.

Open-ended or informal interviews were also utilized. According to Robson (1993:159), open-ended interviews do not have any pre-specified set or order of questions, and the interviewer gives little or no direction, and his goal is to attain insight into the participant's perceptions of the issues under investigation. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 120) claim that informal interviewing is the hallmark of participant observation in which the conversation is casual, and the researcher participates naturally in events as they unfold, and observes them as "carefully and objectively as possible." This insight was very rewarding in this study.

Furthermore, this study utilized position questions that elicited both information and opinion, and employed interpretative questions that provided a check on what I thought I was hearing. This process offered me "an opportunity for yet more information, opinions, and feelings to be revealed," as Meriam and Tisdell (2016: 120) have suggested. Active listening, probes, and

prompts were used to facilitate the conversation. Sensitive silence, repetitive, and summary feedback proved to be significant in making sense of what was said or observed. Both tape recording and note-taking were employed to manage the collected data.

Ethnographers have asserted that there are several advantages to conducting cultural or ethnographic interviews. First, cultural interviews can yield vast amounts of information from participants because they resemble ordinary conversations. Since the participants are not cornered to answer the questions as preset, they may dwell on the areas that they feel comfortable in discussing. This flexibility gives them a sense of being in charge. Hence, in this study, a lot of information was gathered because the respondents felt free to share their experiences without feeling pressured or cornered to do so. In addition to that, this inquiry used elite interviewing, whereby participants with some desired level of knowledge and expertise in Karanga death rituals were identified and interviewed. Marshall and Rossman (1995: 83) postulate that such interviewees are likely to produce an overall view of the information needed because they are likely to be more knowledgeable. This foresight proved to be rewarding in this study.

In addition, Robson (1993: 229), asserts that cultural interviews are flexible, and they allow the researcher to “modify his line of inquiry” as dictated by the direction of the conversation. This flexibility was important because it paved the way for a deep understanding of the rituals. Instead of sticking with the specified key and guiding questions, I took cues from what I was hearing in the conversations. If something that needed pursuing appeared, I gave it the attention it deserved. Moreover, cultural interviews allowed me to be present, ask questions for clarifications, listen,

smile, cry, and just be human. Likewise, the one being interviewed could see, touch, smell, and feel what I was experiencing at the moment, and that would give her or him signals concerning my reaction to the information being shared. This humaneness made the conversations ordinary and personal. I felt being trusted by the participants, and this trust encouraged the participants to share more information.

Since tape recorders were always used except in a few interviews where the participants opted not to be tapped, I had enough time to ask questions and listen to the responses, instead of writing notes all the time. This attention presented me as someone interested in what was being said during the interview, and indeed, I was. It also prevented unnecessary interruptions or stoppages during the interviews. The use of tape recorders reduced the duration of interviews immensely.

One of the most significant weaknesses of cultural interviews is that they are time-consuming for both the researcher and the interviewee. The researcher must be there, sit down with the participant, to listen to the narratives. Some participants offered more information than I had requested, and in many cases, it was awkward for me to stop the interview without enlisting the interviewee's resentment. I had to create time out of my busy schedule. The interviewee's time was also consumed. In some interviews, I discovered that interviewees did not understand the importance of the study and could not commit their time to it fully. A few kept diverging to other issues that had nothing to do with the study. A few others left out important details of the narratives, perhaps to save time.

In addition, Marshall and Rossman (1993: 82) allege that the researcher needs to have questioning and listening skills in order to benefit from culturally open-ended interviews. Even though I had learnt questioning skills, it took some time to be able to apply the knowledge to real-life situations. In this case, I realized that the questions should be sensitive since talking about death, and death rituals could trigger the unfinished business about the deceased family members of the participant. These were practical issues, and usually, respondents spoke from their experiences. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 137) have warned researchers concerning the inevitability of emotions and tears from the participants. I must admit that I shed a tear or two in some interviews because some respondents used examples of the rituals they had performed for their departed relatives. Also, listening is another skill that is required, and may not be easy to acquire. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 125-127) maintain that this active listening requires the use of probes, prompts, and being quiet to facilitate conversations, all done in the right mix, which was not as easy as I had anticipated.

The other challenge, which Marshall and Rossman (1995: 83) have observed is that of finding interviewees because the elite are usually busy people, and are “quite savvy, and may resent restrictions of narrow questions.” If they are ritual practitioners (people who lead their communities in rituals such as traditional healers, spirit mediums, and villages heads), they already have schedules of their own. They may want to give information in their own order rather than following a semi-structured schedule, and this may throw the researcher off balance. I had to remain vigilant when interviewing such participants.

Furthermore, it has been argued that the elite interviewee may exaggerate the extent to which her information is representative of the rituals in the area of research. Some may think that their understanding of the rituals is everyone else's understanding, and this may lead to the imposition of their views upon the community. Marshall and Rossman (1995: 82) assert that some elite interviewees may not be the true representatives of the culture, and the outcome of the study might be impoverished because of that. In this study, all the participants acknowledged that they did not know everything, a declaration I thought was helpful.

Ethnographers may impose values by steering the conversation in the direction of their opinions as Marshall and Rossman (1995: 82) have pointed out. If this happens, and if detected by the participant, she may share what the researcher wants to know, and this may influence the outcome of the interview adversely. They say, a man forewarned is a man forearmed. Despite these setbacks, the interviews remained crucial to this inquiry, and I used them with the full knowledge of most of the setbacks that awaited me. This foreknowledge of the drawbacks of interviews helped me to steer out of them when they appeared.

1.7.2 .2 Observations

Most researchers concur that observation is one of the primary data collection methods in most field studies. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 186–187) have defined a qualitative observation as “when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, the researcher records, in an unstructured or semi-structured way (using some prior questions that the inquirer wants to know), activities at the research site.” In the same spirit, Marshall and Rossman (1995: 80) describe it as a rudimentary and evaluative

tool in all qualitative research, which is used to locate multiplex interplay in natural surroundings. Bailey (1996: 65) contends that researchers observe, not only with their eyes, but also using “listening, smelling, touching, and tasting.”

Some ethnographers have divided field observation into two major categories: participant observation and non-participant observation. Participant observation has already been dealt with under methodology. Singleton, Jr, Straits, and Straits (1993: 322–3) postulate that the nonparticipant observer is “an eavesdropper, someone who attempts to observe people without interacting with them and, typically, without their knowing that they are being observed.” Although this may sound intrusive, it is natural in observation because the researcher, like any other person, observes even without telling the people the times he is or not observing them. In this study, nonparticipant observation was used in conjunction with participant observation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 141–142) have provided a checklist of things to observe such as the “physical setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors,” and the researcher’s own behavior. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 72) remind researchers to always attend to details such as number, age, the gender of the people observed, and, a quantity of chairs, cars, and hens. However, it should be noted that every researcher observes from a particular perspective, that may influence his or her observation. Also, some phenomena can only be understood by insiders as has been already alluded to. My perspective in this inquiry was influenced by postcolonial theory as explained above.

Ethnographic observation has several advantages. One of these advantages is that it involves directness in watching what is being done, how it is being done, and listening to what is being

said, or not said. The researcher is observing what is being done in real-time. Moreover, Singleton, Jr, Straits, and Straits (1993: 318) have noted that observation is flexible, and “because of its flexibility, the field approach lends itself well to studies of dynamic or rapidly changing situations.” It must be mentioned that time constraints and the impromptu nature of some death rituals, imposed limits to what I could observe.

In addition to the above strengths, observation happens in natural environment. The researcher goes to people’s homes or workplaces. In this case, I observed people performing the rituals in their natural settings. I observed the “real life” in the “real world,” as pointed out by Robson (1993: 191).

Qualitative observations have their own challenges too. It should be noted that it is difficult balancing participating and observing as has been noted under methodology. Also, observation can affect the situation because participants tend to exaggerate when they know that they are being observed. Furthermore, observation is time consuming just like interviews. In addition to that, some death rituals are not performed regularly, and it may be impossible to observe them. For instance, death rituals are crisis rituals, which are performed only when death occurs. In this study, I managed to attend only one burial and *magadziro* though I was hoping to have an opportunity to observe several burial rituals. Despite the above-mentioned challenges, qualitative observations remained crucial and beneficial in gathering the data for this study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory provided the theoretical or philosophical worldview or assumptions through which death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena were explored and analyzed in this study. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 62) have defined a theoretical framework as a “broad explanation for behavior and attitudes,” which “provides an overall orienting lens” and a “transformative perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analyzed, and provides a call for action or change.” It is the “underlying structure, the scaffolding,” or the perspective that a researcher brings to the study, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 85) have succinctly pointed out. It refers to the angle from which the investigator interprets and understands the topic.

1.8.1 Colonialism as Foundational to Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is intimately related to the process of colonialism by which Western countries went to Africa and other continents, conquering, subjugating, exploiting, and oppressing the indigenous people of such continents. For one to intelligibly and fruitfully explore and expound postcolonialism as a theory, the effects that colonialism had on both the colonized and the colonizers should also be examined because it was in the process of colonialism that the Westerners demeaned and condemned most of the cultures of the colonized, and unremorsefully exploited their natural resources. As if that was not disrespectful enough, they imposed their own culture on the colonized.

Osterhammel (1997: 16–17) defines colonialism as “a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders.” For Osterhammel

(1997: 16–17), colonialism included the “invasion and confiscation” of the indigenous people’s land, and the imposition of the colonizer’s culture upon the colonized. In some cases, treaties to occupy or takeover the countries earmarked for colonization were obtained through hook and crook, and in most cases, such apparently innocuous treaties were followed by lethal force against the indigenous people. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the Rudd Concession was signed in 1888, by Cecil John Rhodes’ representatives (Charles Rudd, Rochfort Maguire, and Francis Thompson), and Lobengula, the Ndebele King, (Mlambo, 2014: 38). Mlambo (2014: 38) believes that King Lobengula was reluctant to sign the treaty until he was outwitted by Rhodes’ representatives because of the misrepresentations made to him by the Reverend Helm, a member of the London Missionary Society, stationed in Bulawayo, who King Lobengula considered a friend.

The Rudd Concession was followed by the physical occupation of Mashonaland by the Pioneer Column, in 1890, and the subsequent vanquishing of the Ndebele people during the Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893. This War was followed by the Ndebele and Shona Uprisings, which historians call the First *Chimurenga/Umvukela* of 1896. In both revolts, both the Ndebele and the Shona were defeated and disarmed, and subsequently subjected to the brutal, oppressive, and exploitative British rule for almost a century.

Wherever the indigenous people were vanquished, the colonizers made it abundantly clear that everything about themselves was superior to that of the conquered people. It was impressed upon the minds of the indigenous people, that the colonizer’s intellect, education, philosophy, psychology, language, food, songs, dances, religion, and so on, were superior to that of the

colonized people. The way of life of the colonized was trampled upon. Quarcoopome (1987: 15) brings this point home to Africa by stating that the colonized Africans were seen as “uncultured” and “primitive,” and their religion was referred to as “paganism,” “heathenism,” “animism,” and “ancestor worship.” Idowu (1975: 109) and many other African scholars condemn the use of such misleading and derogatory terms about Africans and their religions. Indeed, everything about Africans, such as food, songs, dances, names, rituals, and gods was denigrated.

In Zimbabwe, just like what happened in other African States, Mwari, the Shona God was belittled, and his sacred shrines at Matonjeni, desecrated by the missionaries. In reference to Mwari, Thomas Morgan Thomas (1972: 17), a member of the London Missionary Society, who worked in Matabeleland wrote, “In reality, however, he (Mwari) is no other than one of the original aristocrats of the country, who being well versed in the traditions of his forefathers, the priestcraft and witchcraft of his tribe, manages to blind the people and hide his true character from them.” Thomas (1972: 17) further argued that (Mwari) Ukwali’s knowledge and wisdom was a result of the conniving between the high priest and the people who lived in the shrine village. For Thomas (1972: 17), Mwari was a fake god, and not worthy of praise and worship.

Although colonialism refers to a specific era, which is supposed to have ended with the decolonization of the colonized countries, postcolonial theorists argue that its effects on both the colonizer and the colonized are ongoing. One of the postcolonial theorists who systematically expounded the process and effects of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized is Alberti Memmi, a Tunisian of Jewish origins. In his book, *The Colonizer and The Colonized*, published in 1965, he explores North Africa’s attainment of independence from France in 1956.

Even though he writes from that particular perspective, the theories he propounded are applicable to most of the colonized peoples. In this book, Memmi (1965: 85) explores the powerful position the colonizer has at his disposal, which he uses to define and determine the fate of the colonized. Memmi (1965: 85) alleges that the colonizer achieves that objective by doing two things. First, by constantly portraying the colonized by what he is not, and describing him as a good for nothing person—lazy, diseased, and uneducated. Second, “The colonized is never characterized individually; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity,” (Memmi, 1965: 85). For instance, the sin that has been committed by one of the colonized is attributed to all of them, and may be used to stereotype and dehumanize all of their kind. Once one is found wanting, all are condemned.

In the same spirit, Césaire (1972: 42) explores the connection between the colonized and the colonizer as follows: “Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses.” Césaire (1972: 42) further alleges that the physical condemnation of the colonized leads to psychological colonization, which compels the colonized to accept the inferiority he and his kind are accused of. What Césaire says above is in line with what Memmi (1965: 87) had written: “willfully created and spread by the colonizer, this mythical and degrading portrait ends up by being accepted and lived with to a certain extent by the colonized.” This acceptance of a distorted identity leads to the self-alienation of the colonized. Memmi (1965: 11–12) argues that the colonized and the colonizer are joined together as if by fate, and in this relationship, every act in

the daily life of the colonizer “places him in a relationship with the colonized, and with each act, his fundamental advantage is demonstrated.”

According to Memmi (1965: 12), even though the lives of the colonizer and the colonized are conjoined as if by fate, the colonizer’s life is made palatable for him by the system that he has established. For instance, “the police treat the colonizer with respect,” and the government readily assists him, if need be; he does not stand in long lines, and has an enormous “advantage in finding employment,” (Memmi, 1965: 12). Thus, colonialism created an unequal yoke between the colonized and the colonizer. Memmi (1965: 89) paradoxically describes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as both “destructive and creative.”

According to Memmi 1965: 89) the bond disfigures the oppressor into “a partial, unpatriotic and treacherous being, worrying only about his privileges and their defenses,” and it turns the colonized into a dehumanized, violated, and “oppressed creature.”

Césaire (1972: 35), pursues Memmi’s line of arguing, by accusing colonization of decivilizing, brutalizing, and degrading the colonizer, in order to “awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism . . .” In the same spirit, Osterhammel (1997: 15) defines colonialism as an affinity between the oppressors and the subjugated, “in which an entire society is robbed of its historical line of development, externally manipulated and transformed according to the needs and interests of the colonial rulers,” which are to subjugate and pillage. Césaire (1972: 43) claims that colonizers demonized and stifled every aspect of the conquered societies and buried their potential of ever developing their own economy. In this criticism of the colonialists, Césaire (1972: 33) ropes in Christianity by

condemning missionaries as the chief culprits, who “laid down the dishonest equations Christianity = civilization, paganism = savagery.”

In support of Césaire’s sentiments, Osterhammel (1997: 15) postulates that colonization was preached as the fulfilment of the Whiteman’s divine mandate to save and “civilize” the “savages.” For Osterhammel (1997: 96), the missionaries played a significant, if not notorious role in “subjugating and alienating” the indigenous people. First, although some missionaries criticized the oppression of the indigenous people, others “supported colonial annexation, affirmed the colonial system on principle, and shared the cultural arrogance of their secular compatriots, which could escalate to brutal aggression towards non-European ways of life.” They shared the dreams of the colonizers who claimed to bring “Western civilization” to the indigenous people, and to “activate the neglected resources in the backyard countries for the general benefit of the world economy,” (Osterhammel, 1997: 97). Second, the missionaries converted the people to Christianity and established schools at which the Western cultural values were transmitted as divinely prescribed truths, and the English language imposed as the most advanced language, (Osterhammel, 1997: 97). Third, the missionaries suppressed indigenous religious beliefs and practices and encouraged people to accept Christianity, which taught individualism, and undermined the extended family model, (Osterhammel, 1997: 97). Fourth, the cultural heritage of the indigenous people was severely disrupted, and a new hybrid culture heralded, (Osterhammel, 1997: 102).

The unequal relationship between the colonized and colonizer inevitably created poverty for the colonized and tremendous benefits for the oppressors. Of course, the lopsided relationship was

freely accepted by the colonizers because they stood to benefit from it, but the colonized were dragged into it, and most of them abhorred it, initially. Memmi (1965: 124) contends that the painful result of this relationship was that the colonized started emulating the master, although such efforts were received with contempt by the colonizer. Fanon (1952: 202) thinks that the black man accepted and acknowledged “the undeniable superiority of the white man, and all his endeavors aim at achieving a white existence.” He (Fanon, 1965: 141) alleges that “The black man wants to be like the white. For the black man, there is but one destiny. And it is white.” For Memmi (1965:124), the black man is never successful in becoming White, for he suffers alienation from which he should be cured first. This cure will lead to the cessation of his alienation.

Fanon (1965: 152) prescribes a way to salvation, which begins with the colonized conquering himself, and freeing “himself concerning the religion of his group by either accepting or rejecting it,” and finally by ceasing to define himself through “the categories of the colonizer.” Osterhammel (1997: 111) claims that the European values which were imposed through education and Christianity made the colonized to feel inadequate and forced them to identify with the aggressor. He calls for the decolonization of the world economy, colonized, and colonizer (Osterhammel, 1997: 116–117). This is the framework in which postcolonial theory is understood in this study.

1.8.2 What is Postcolonialism or Postcolonial Theory?

Etymologically, the term postcolonialism is a compound word formed by two Latin words *post* and *colonia* or *colonus*, (Mishra and Hodge, 2005: 378). The two scholars (Mishra and Hodge,

2005: 378) further contend that the prefix, *post*, “gestures toward a time just after some main event that defines its existence, of which it is the shadow.” Colony has its roots in the Latin *colonia* or *colonus*, meaning farmer. *Colonus*’ root and primary meaning “was an inhabitant or farmer, and from this usage, it drifted to refer to a settler in a foreign place, a “colonist” in the modern sense, and it eventually came to refer to invasive settlements, (Mishra and Hodge, 2005: 378). Mishra and Hodge, (2005: 378) make a distinction between colonist and colonialist, whereby colonists created a colony by their actions, but colonialists “reflect the qualities of a colony, the attributes, and attitudes associated with it.”

Essentially, postcolonialism is a contestable term, and as a result of that, it does not have a universally acceptable and conclusive definition. Be that as it may, scholars are not deterred in offering working definitions of the term. According to Hiddleston (2009: 3), postcolonialism refers to the “events that succeeded” the onset of the post-colonial period, and it “names the period of colonial rule, together with its gradual weakening and demise.” For Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243), colonality refers to deep rooted systems of power that were created by colonialism, “but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration.”

In an endeavor to define postcolonialism, Mishra and Hodge (2005: 377–378) have made two notable observations, the first being that the term “postcolonial(ism)” is rarely used on its own, for it is usually one of two or more terms that are used together, and the most prominent being “postcolonial” and “third world” or “postmodern” (establishing a loose equivalence). Second, the

term postcolonialism has been weakened and marginalized because of its neglect by scholars for the adjective “postcolonial.”

According to Hall (1996: 246), postcolonial refers to a “descriptive,” and “not evaluative process,” of detachment from the multi-faceted and inescapable “colonial syndrome,” which affects all the people of the colonized countries. It admits that the colonial created a culture that continues to live in its “aftereffects,” (Hall, 1996: 248). Lynes (2012: 688) contends that “Postcolonialism is a field of study primarily composed of the critique of a variety of different colonial endeavors undertaken by a range of different countries and political regimes.” Hence, postcolonial theory has been defined as a field of studies that evaluates the circumstances of colonized peoples both during and after colonialism. Mishra and Hodge (2005: 378) argue that even though postcolonial theory is notoriously difficult to define, it captures “a seemingly unique moment in world history, a configuration of experiences and insights, hopes and dreams arising from a hitherto silenced part of the world,” taking advantage of new conditions to “search for alternatives to the discourses of the colonial era.”

1.8.3 Features and Focus of Postcolonial Theory

Lynes (2012: 688) contends that postcolonialism is concerned about “the effects of colonial practices on people and places both while engaged in the struggle for independence from colonial rule and, where free of its original imposition, during its continued struggle with its very often perniciously divisive legacy.” Lynes (2012: 689) further observes that while the physical occupation is gone, the colonizing processes and ambitions are a present reality. For Lynes (2012: 689) postcolonial research tries to understand “both the history and the legacy of

colonization” to unearth the “deleterious effects of the violence, discrimination, and subjugation” of the colonized people. (Lynes, 2012: 689) further asserts that postcolonial research examines the various shapes of resistance instigated by the oppressor’s practices.

Young (2003: 2–6) observes and acknowledges the inequalities and divisions between the people of the West (Europeans, Americans) and non-west (Asians, Latin Americans, and Africans), which he claims were caused by the colonization of the latter by the former, and the subsequent subordination and dehumanization of the colonized. In this light, Young (2003: 4–6) asserts that postcolonial theory is an ongoing, anti-colonial struggle, which names a “philosophy and politics” that can be used to eradicate the differences caused by colonialism. Furthermore, postcolonial theory promotes the “dynamic power” of the cultures of the formerly colonized peoples and advocates their right to access the economic resources of the world, (Young, 2003: 4–6). In addition to that, postcolonial theory seeks to promote the “knowledge, as well as needs, developed outside the West,” by promoting the articulation of the politics of the “subordinated classes and peoples,” (Young, 2003: 6).

For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 178), postcolonial theory explores and exposes the “coloniality of being,” which he defines as “the social, ideological, and epistemological process of reproduction of black people as a different human species, which is not worthy of treatment in an ethical way.” Quoting Grosfoguel (2007), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 178) asserts that “The black inferior other was reproduced ideologically and represented socially as lacking soul, history, writing, religion, culture, knowledge, development, human rights, and lacking democracy.” Looking at postcolonialism from this perspective, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 178) advocates for the cultural

transformation of Higher Education to promote and produce African graduates who utilize African perspectives, and are not “copycats” of Europeans and Americans. In addition to that, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 130) proposes a postcolonial theory that produces an “African renaissance,” whose sole objective is to transcend the “vicissitudes of histories of Orientalizing, inferiorizing, and othering of African subjectivity,” which is informed by a profound knowledge of both African and global history. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 178), this process will produce Africans who can rise above “discourses of equilibrium,” and eradicate the alienation that Africans have suffered on the hands of Westerners, (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013: 178). This African reawakening will help Africans in “transcending the distractions cascading from colonialism,” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013: 179).

According to Göttsche (2017: 111–112), “The rise of postcolonial theory and research has been characterized by the deliberate blending of a historical, a political and a conceptual understanding of the postcolonial, understood as a socio-cultural condition as well as a critical and cultural discourse.” Göttsche (2017: 112) claims that postcolonial theory is transformative in the sense that it “rereads and rewrites” “colonial history and culture, including their present-day extensions,” with the intention of eradicating the resilient “legacies and recurring transformations of European colonialism and imperialism” in the formerly colonized world. For Göttsche (2017: 120), postcolonialism is an ongoing process that deals with all the culture influenced by imperialism from the onset of colonization up to now. Göttsche (2017: 112) further asserts that since this “discourse emerged after colonialism and is decidedly anticolonial in its outlook,” it aspires to move beyond colonialism and its ongoing aftermath.

In support of all the above-mentioned theorists, Hiddleston (2009: 4) contends that postcolonial critique involves several things: First, it involves an examination of the consequences of colonialism during its zenith, and the period following colonization. Second, it interrogates the use of “colonial power both before and after decolonization.” Third, it identifies the “analysis of the mechanics of colonial power, the economic exploitation it brought with it, and a form of both cultural and ethical critique or questioning.” Fourth, it raises pertinent questions, condemns colonial politics and economics, and advocates a cultural uprising and renaissance.

Unfortunately, Hiddleston (2009: 4) admits that postcolonial theory raises relevant questions about the past and present effects of colonization, but it does not have the answers to the pertinent questions that it asks.

1.8.4 Major Theorists of Postcolonial Theory

Even though a myriad of theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Benedict Anderson, Kwaku Asante-Darko, William Boelhower, David Brooks, Partha Chatterjee, Hubert Harrison, Edward W. Said, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, among others, immensely contributed to postcolonial critique as an academic discipline, this section will only briefly explore the thoughts of Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), Edward W. Said (1935-2003), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942 – present). These scholars have been chosen not necessarily because their works are the most significant, intelligible, and cogent of all, but because their contexts and examples best serve the purpose of this study.

1.8.4.1 Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)

According to Lynes (2012: 691), Frantz Fanon was born in Martinique, “but his contributions to postcolonial thought are derived primarily from experiences associated with the Algerian war of independence from 1958 to 1962.” It is believed that his work as a psychiatrist in Algeria exposed him to the psychological challenges and effects of the war on both the colonized and the colonizers.

In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, he deconstructs the experiences of the colonized black people, and explains how they dealt with the belittling and degrading mindsets and the oppression they received from the colonizers. Fanon (1952: 34) argues that, although the black man can easily use withdrawal to defend himself against his dehumanization by Europeans, that mechanism is impotent because the black man “needs white approval.” Because of the incessant demeaning and demonization of his culture, the black man hates himself and wants to be white, (Fanon 1952: 202). For Fanon (1952: 202), although it is abundantly clear that the black man is dehumanized because of the color of his skin, some black men, because of their craving to assimilate into the white man’s culture, deny that their black color is the cause of their dehumanization.

Fanon (1952: 1) observes that “the black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow Blacks, the other with the Whites. A black man behaves differently with a white man than he does with another black man.” The black man must master that split personality to appease his doctors, superiors, and so on who are Whites, (Fanon, 1952: 7). Furthermore, Fanon (1952: 75) seems to praise the black man for rejecting or misunderstanding Christianity. He blames the lack

of basic needs such as food for the Black's refusal to accept Christianity. He writes, "And if Blacks are impervious to the teachings of Christ, it's not because they are incapable of assimilating these teachings. Understanding something new requires us to be inclined, to be prepared, and demands a new state of mind."

In his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963: 23) alleges that colonialism is "naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence," and consequently calls for the use of greater violence to end it. Fanon (1963: 149, 171) maintains that colonialism disfigures and distorts a people's history, and it alienates them from their culture by forcing them to confess to their inferiority. This inferiority complex is repeatedly imposed upon the colonized until it is accepted and internalized. Fanon (1963: 2) encourages decolonization—a creation of "new men," which seeks to dismantle the colonial order, and should be created by the men it liberates. The colonized should use any means necessary to liberate themselves because their values are demonized, and "irreversibly poisoned and infected" by the colonizers. As if that is not evil enough, the values of the oppressors such as individualism, are imposed on the colonized. Fanon, (1963: 8) claims that the liberation would make Blacks discover their dignified humanity.

Fanon (1963: 7) also revisits the evil contribution of Christianity to the oppression of Blacks by condemning the "colonial church," which he admonishes for not converting the colonized "to the ways of God, but the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor." As he concludes his book, Fanon, (1963: 238) encourages the colonized who have attained liberation to find a new direction and to avoid imitating and competing with Europeans.

“No, we do not want to catch up with anyone. But what we want is to walk in the company of man, every man, night and day, for all times,” (Fanon, 1963: 238).

1.8.4.2 Edward W. Said (1935-2003)

Edward W. Said was born in Jerusalem, in 1935, and was a professor of literature at Columbia University. His book, *Orientalism*, first published in 1978, “has become recognized as a key foundational work in postcolonial scholarship,” (Lynes, 2012: 693). Hence, he is respected as one of the founding fathers of postcolonial studies. In *Orientalism*, he deals with the manner in which the Westerners obtained and continue to acquire knowledge of the people of the Orient. Said (1979: 1) argues that “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.” Furthermore, Said (1979: 222) contends that “the cultural, temporal, and geographical” difference between the “West and the Orient was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise.” Consequently, phrases such as “the veils of an Eastern bride” or “the inscrutable Orient”, were frequently used, (Said, 1979: 222).

Said (1979: 2) defines Orientalism as “as a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." In addition to that, he (Said, 1979: 6) sees Orientalism “as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness . . .” It is “the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice,” (Said, 1979: 73). Said (1979: 3) also asserts that the Orient was a brainchild of European imagination.

Said (1979: 5) condemns the relationship between the Orient and the West as one of power and domination by the Europeans. Reflecting on the domination of Egypt by the British, Said (1979: 36) writes: “There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominates; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power.” For Said, the West uses degrading stereotypes about the East and find it extremely hard to overcome such negative generalizations. One of the peddled distorted information was that the people of the Middle East and Asia were so primitive that they were oblivious of their own history and culture, and therefore in need of cultural salvation by the West, (Said, 1979: 36). This erroneous perspective served to justify the Western cultural imposition on the colonized people.

1.8.4.3 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942 – present)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was born in 1942 in Calcutta, West Bengal. She is believed to have been popularized by her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” which is seen as one of the primary and classical conceptual writings in postcolonial studies. The essay was published in several journals, under different titles, starting in 1985. The essay’s primary concern is how Western cultures study other cultures. She explores European writers such as Karl Marx, and expounds the ethical challenges scholars of his caliber encounter in relying on Western concepts and frameworks to investigate a different culture. Spivak (1988: 96–98) offers an illustration of *Sati*, an Indian practice in which widows were expected or even encouraged to commit suicide. Spivak (1988: 96–98) convincingly argues that the motives behind *Sati* may be difficult to

“reclaim and rewrite” using Western historical frameworks. Spivak (1988: 96–98) also accuses the West of trying to study third world subjects without cooperation from the colonized people.

In addition to that, Spivak (1988: 90) bemoans the challenges facing third world people, particularly if they are “poor, black, and female.” For her, the subaltern is those who belong to the third world.

She concludes her essay in dramatically saying, “The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with ‘woman’ as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish,” (Spivak, 1988: 104). For Lynes (2012: 694) this does not imply that the third world women cannot speak or write but refers to the difficulty they have of “articulating deeply and creatively” any kind of knowledge.

1.8.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of Postcolonial Theory

One of the strengths of postcolonial theory is its interdisciplinary approach. Kumar (2011: 666) has asserted this point aptly, “Perhaps, then, postcolonial theory is best suited to normative interdisciplinarity for its implied anti-disciplinary stance, that is, no single discipline better-equipped to articulate select social issues.” This embracing of a wide range of disciplinary methodologies brings it at home to a diverse audience. Any discipline can use it to articulate the issues of racial discrimination and oppression from that discipline’s perspective.

In addition to that, postcolonial theory is to a certain extent, therapeutic because it acknowledges that the humiliation, dehumanization, subjugation, and oppression of the colonized by colonialists cannot be swept under the carpet. These evils need to be explored from a perspective that empowers and heals the battered cultural integrity of the colonized. Kennedy (2016: 98) observes the reluctance by most postcolonial countries to revisit “the painful circumstances” of colonialism because of the fear of reviving emotional wounds. Postcolonial theory may help people to explore their painful past and to reframe their present. It is also therapeutic to the colonizer, who was also affected by his abuse of power, exploitation, and dehumanization of the colonized and their resources. The colonizer needs to perform an introspection to discover where he went wrong so that he may repent and rediscover his humanity. Postcolonial theory provides such opportunities for both the wounded and the perpetrator.

However, postcolonial theory, like any other theory, has its weaknesses. It is a reactionary theory that responds to the injustices done, and the evil perpetrated upon the colonized by the colonizers. Some of the theorists seem aggrieved because of the way the colonized were treated by the colonizers. Some of them, just like the rest of the colonized, seem to suffer from an injured conscience because of colonialism’s past and ongoing effects. Consequently, the blame they pile on colonizers, and sometimes the language they use to describe the process of colonialism may be inflammatory, and may serve to harden the hearts of the colonizer.

According to Young (2003: 7), the term postcolonial is disliked by some people because of several reasons: First, it disturbs the world order. Second, it threatens the privileges and power of the former colonizer. Third, it does not recognize the supremacy of Western cultures.” Fourth, it

demands equality and well-being of all people. What Young (2003: 7) articulates makes a lot of sense because often, we encounter people who think that the best solution to painful and traumatic experiences is to bury them under the carpet. They encourage the offended to “get over it” and move on with life. For some people, this solution is preferable because it does not unsettle the waters. It does not interfere with the status quo created by cultural imperialism. It does not disarrange the peace. It does not incite the former colonized against the colonizers. Consequently, postcolonial theorists are suspected of trying to gain political mileage out of their writings.

Mishra (2015: 387) encourages postcolonial theory “to be forever vigilant,” to avoid reducing “the lived experiences of people” to mere “abstractions or to some kind of absolute “gaze,” the camera eye, fixed and unchanging, through which the other is given meaning and form.” But it is a fact that time changes things. Perceptions and feelings do not remain the same.

In response to the interdisciplinarity of postcolonial theory, Kumar (2011: 668) criticizes it as being “highly selective, tactful, contriving, and by no means uniform across the spectrum.” This multi-disciplinary character, however, makes the theory a bit complex to comprehend and prevents it from speaking with one voice, since the reader has to be acquainted with the concerned disciplines. While its interdisciplinary nature is positive, it may lead to confusion among its students. To a certain extent, the theory is too abstract, particularly for casual readers, and the fact that it derives its examples from unfamiliar territories and disciplines may be a challenge to readers. One must be a scholar of world history or geography or philosophy, and so on, to fully comprehend the theory, and its main objectives.

1.8.6 Relevance of Postcolonial Theory to my Study

At this juncture, the question to ask is how relevant postcolonial theory is to the study of death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena. Despite the weaknesses of postcolonial theory, it remains crucial and relevant to this study. Zimbabwe was a colony of Britain for almost a century (1890–1980). During that period, the indigenous people of Zimbabwe were demonized, dehumanized, exploited, oppressed, and segregated against because of their skin color. Every aspect of their culture was affected by the European culture that was sold as being superior to the black people's culture. Christianity was offered to the people, at times, arbitrarily. The indigenous people's religion was demonized, and their God and ancestors condemned and insulted. Indigenous death rituals were not spared in that condemnation.

This study sought to retrace the African footsteps to the death rituals among the Karanga, as they were practiced in the past, establish their meanings then and now, and identify and describe how they have changed because of their encounter with the cultures of the colonialists. This exploration resulted in the composition of a death rituals manual recommended for the Karanga who still want to follow the Karanga traditional burial practices.

1.9 SAMPLE COLLECTION

Singleton, Jr, Straits, and Strait (1993: 172, 173) define sampling as “the process of selecting a subset of cases in order to draw conclusions about the entire set,” in which the description of the targeted population from which units will be collected for the purpose of generalization is

crucial. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 104) suggest that one of the first steps in sampling “is to make a preliminary identification of places, activities, events, and people.” Basically, there are two types of sampling, namely, probability and non-probability sampling. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 96), probability sampling allows researchers to broadly apply the outcome of the study by using “the sample to the population from which it is drawn.” Kalton (1983: 91) defines non-probability sampling as where an expert in the area chooses the samples to be used as determined by the purpose of the investigation.

This study used non-probability sampling, particularly its form known as purposive or purposeful sampling. Singleton, Jr, Straits, and Straits (1993: 160) say that “in this form of sampling, the investigator relies on his or her expert judgment to select units that are representative or typical of the population.” Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 96) claim that “Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned.”

There are several types of purposive sampling such as typical, unique, convenience, maximum variation, and snowball or referral sampling. This study employed convenience and snowball sampling, whose efficacy has been claimed by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 104) to be based on the availability of time, financial resources, location, participants, and other factors. In convenience sampling, the researcher participates and observes events as they happen. Since I had limited time and resources, this type of sampling proved handy.

It has been observed that snowball is the most commonly used form of sampling in qualitative research. The investigator drafts the criteria and then targets participants that meet those criteria. The criteria may be influenced by the age, gender, education, and the required expertise of the selected participants about the area under investigation. According to Singleton, Jr, Straits, and Straits (1993: 164), this method utilizes the process of chain referral whereby targeted participants are requested to provide names and addresses of other participants with the relevant knowledge of the issues being studied.

These sampling methods were ideal for this study because there were certain characteristics that I was looking for in a participant. First, one was to be either a woman or man who had participated in several Karanga death rituals. One of my presumptions was that experiences of such persons had enabled them to acquire the treasured knowledge and wisdom concerning those rituals. Second, by virtue of the interviewee's advanced age, one was presumed to be a sacred practitioner in Karanga religious beliefs, and as such, one was expected to be a repository of the Karanga traditional knowledge. However, this assumption did not rule out younger Karanga people, who because of one reason or another, had the required the knowledge and expertise of Karanga death rituals. So, the acquisition and possession of the required expertise overrode the age criterion. Third, traditional leaders such as village heads were assumed to make best interviewees because they are already sacred practitioners of the traditional rituals that I intended to study. Where necessary, the interviewed members of the population were requested to suggest names of other experts. The people already interviewed were always ready to provide me with that information, for they knew other experts in the field.

At the beginning of the study, it was difficult to predict the sample size, but as the inquiry began, I was convinced that I could not interview more than twenty participants. Therefore, I ended up interviewing fifteen participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2018: 101) have advised qualitative researchers to give a tentative number of interviews at the beginning, and do research until they reach the saturation point, which means the point where they begin to hear the same things again and again. At ten interviews I began to hear the same things, and I felt saturated and satisfied that I had gathered adequate data to make valid conclusions about the topic under scrutiny. However, I continued until I had interviewed five more participants.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS

In any research method, the collected data need to be analyzed for it to be more meaningful and intelligible to both the researcher and the readers. Flick (2014: 5) has defined the process of data analysis as “the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it.” In affirmation of that, Creswell and Creswell (2018: 191–192) think of the same phenomenon as involving the segmentation and “taking apart the data (like peeling back the layers of an onion) as well as putting it back together.”

DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 163) claim that “The goal of all data analysis is the summation of large quantities of data into understandable information from which well-supported and well-argued conclusions are drawn.” This study utilized simultaneous data analysis, which refers to a process where data already collected is analyzed, while the process of data collection is still

ongoing, (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 197). This process enabled me to save time and to process the data when they were still vivid in my mind. In addition to that, this study used the winnowing method, which Creswell and Creswell (2018: 192) claim to allow the researcher to focus on some of the data, not all, because of the richness and depth of the collected data. The nature of the issue under investigation generated large quantities of relevant data, some of which I did not need to analyze due to time constraints and repetition.

Some scholars, such as Bogdan and Biklen (2011: 161–169), have suggested the employment of some ten steps in data analysis, which include the choice of a focused and right type of the research topic, asking the right kind of questions, which are influenced by the previous data collected, writing of comments and memos about observations and learnings, “testing the ideas and themes on participants,” processing literature while still doing fieldwork, using metaphors, analogies, and visualizing beyond what is said. The research topic was focused on death rituals, comments were inserted into the research notes, and ideas and themes were tested on the participants during fieldwork. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 193–195) recommend a five-step data analysis process, which involves the organization and preparation of the data for analysis, identification of the overall meaning and ideas of the data, the coding of the data, the establishment of themes, and the representation of the description.

The study used three major death themes or categories. First, pre-burial rituals, which include the Karanga causes of sickness and death, and all the rituals that are performed before burial. Second, burial rituals, which are performed on the day of, or immediately after burial. Third, post-burial rituals, which refer to all the rituals that are performed after the burial of the

deceased. The sub-themes under each theme were identified, and each category had a different number of themes. These identified sub-themes, their significance, and likely changes were then briefly explained in four tables. Each sub-theme, its significance, and cultural changes (if any) were then described in detail in subsequent narratives. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 195) assert that these detailed narratives are crucial in the presentation of qualitative research findings. These narratives display multiple views from individuals interviewed although they may not be mentioned by real name or pseudonym. Pre-existing literature was used in the report of some findings, not to influence the interviewees' views, but to bolster, clarify, and define certain concepts employed. The major findings of the study were presented in those detailed narratives under each of the three major themes.

Coding or categorization is one of the crucial aspects of qualitative data analysis, and this study utilized it as soon as the data was collected. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 173), coding involves identifying themes from the responses by reading the notes in order to build an effective and sufficient argument. Although scholars do not have a consensus on the number of categories or themes to be used, Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 214), basing on their experience, argue that "the fewer the categories, the greater the level of abstraction, and the greater the ease with which you can communicate your findings to others." Although there are many types of coding, this study utilized in-text coding. Rubin and Rubin (2005: 219–220) define in-text coding as involving writing in bold, adding in brackets, codes, or words that the researcher would have created for themes, or placing codes against each theme. In this study, words were used.

Since this inquiry falls under religio-cultural studies, what the participants said about the same concept or theme were refined, synthesized, integrated, ranked, sorted, compared, modified, and interpreted where necessary, as Rubin and Rubin (2005: 225) have advised. Where the significance of the death ritual was not remembered or mentioned, I used these synthesized themes to provide possible meanings of certain rituals. The outcome of this process was the postulation of the extent to which the principles and processes go. Rubi and Rubin (2005: 230) refer to these findings as “middle level theory,” which they say is the goal of qualitative researchers. The findings were finally used to establish a rubric for Karanga traditional burials.

1.11 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Creswell and Creswell (2018: 199) postulate that “validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the reader of an account.” Its purpose is to make one’s study trustworthy and credible. Every study is intended to find out something that will further the audience’s understanding of the issues in question. Hence, the researcher should do everything in his or her power to produce valid and credible results.

This study used the following strategies: triangulation, respondent validation, and refutability principle. Triangulation is the utilization of several data gathering methods. It includes member checking, which Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 246) describe as an ongoing checking of the researcher’s interpretations of his observations, and soliciting for feedback from the participants. In support of that, Creswell and Poth (2018: 328) define it as the process whereby, “researchers

make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of their study.” This checking was done during and after the gathering of the data. Three professors with expertise in the area were asked to evaluate the analysis, and their suggestions were utilized in writing the narratives.

According to Silverman (2000: 177), respondent validation involves the invitation of the researched people to review the temporary research outcome, and then revising and updating them accordingly. It gives them an opportunity to evaluate the findings and to challenge any conclusions that do not reflect their views on the issue being investigated. The researcher, knowing that his work would be assessed by the researched people, is compelled to be faithful to the data collected. All the participants whose data were analyzed were asked for feedback about the preliminary findings of the study either at the end of the interview or observation, or after the compilation of the draft document. Their input was incorporated into the final draft of the study.

Connected to respondent validation is the refutability principle. Silverman (2000:177) asserts that the refutability principle is the process of refuting one’s own assumed assumptions about the phenomena under investigation. Every investigator carries some assumptions into the research field, and if these assumptions are not kept under constant check, they may negatively color the research outcome. Some scholars have suggested that the assumptions should be acknowledged, and even declared at the beginning of the research, and called to mind at every stage of the study. I had to check my assumptions all the time because my preexisting knowledge of the Karanga death rituals kept coming in the way. This ongoing checking of my assumptions helped me to see things anew, and get new meanings that I had never heard or thought of before.

Qualitative validity and reliability are closely related. Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 251) define reliability as the scope to which research outcomes can be reproduced. Of course, the replication of research results has its own challenges, one of which is that human behavior is not static, as many cultural anthropologists have observed. Consequently, the context of the people and the time at which the study was carried out may influence the outcome. Be that as it may, this study was committed to producing findings, which agree with the data gathered, at the time the study was carried out, within the given context of the researched people. The goal was to produce results that proceeded from the collected data, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 251) have suggested.

1.12 RESEARCHER BIASES AND ASSUMPTIONS

In qualitative research, biases are the subjectivities, influences, worldviews, and presumptions that accompany the researcher into the study. Every researcher has biases and assumptions, and these should be clarified and declared in order to create “open and honest narrative that will resonate well with the readers,” as Creswell and Creswell (2018: 200) have advised. Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 16) maintain that it is not good enough to try to eliminate assumptions and biases or pretend that they do not exist, but to “identify them and monitor them in relation to the theoretical framework and in light of the researcher’s own interests, to make clear how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data.”

Like any other researcher, I had my implicit and explicit biases and assumptions as I embarked on this inquiry. First, I was born and grew up in the area where I did my fieldwork. To a certain extent, I consider myself to be an insider concerning the issues that I intended to investigate.

Although there are both advantages and disadvantages of being an insider, it was the disadvantages that were likely to adversely impact on the outcome of my study. I discovered that Schreiter (1985: 20) was right when he contended that “being a lifelong member of a local community does not guarantee insight,” because things were not as easy and clear as I had anticipated. Another bias that I held was that, sometimes, as an insider, I expected to hear the things that I already knew, but it was not always the case. Since, I also observe the same Karanga death rituals, and had participated in their performance on several occasions, I am an interested part. This interest tried to influence the way I approached the study, as well as my interpretation of the findings. However, I kept this influence under check.

Second, I am a Christian pastoral theologian, and therefore, might be considered an outsider in Karanga traditional religion. I have been educated in theology, and the aim of education is to give its recipient a wider, if not a new perspective about issues. Education does change one’s status or perspective as many scholars have noted. Schreiter (1985: 20) thinks that any experience gotten from outside one’s culture may lead the insider to disdain his own roots if not kept under check. The influence that comes from my theological education was likely to increase my biases. More so, the moment the interviewees got to know that I was a Christian, they were tempted to tell me what they felt I expected to hear from them. The traditional religion has been condemned by some Christian preachers for a long time, and some participants could have been afraid of further condemnation, and that mentality might have compelled them to tell me what

they felt I needed to get from them. I kept reminding them of my unwavering respect for the Karanga traditional rituals.

Third, one of the assumptions that I carried into the fieldwork was that many Karanga people of Nyajena still remembered and performed their traditional death rituals. I assumed that I would find people who had refused to be contaminated by modernity, and still remembered how the death rituals were performed by the Karanga of Nyajena in the past, and how they are performed now, and detect any changes that might have taken place. As custodians of the traditional religious practices of their families, I expected them to remember the significance of such practices. Well, some of them could not remember the praxis and significance of some of death rituals. I also assumed that many people of Nyajena mixed both traditional and Christian death rituals, and erroneously concluded that their knowledge might have been diluted, but some of the participants had a solid understanding of the traditional rituals. Schreiter (1985: 148) terms this religious mixing of religious practices “dual religiosity.” In fact, this assumption was proved wrong, since I interviewed some Karanga who never converted to Christianity, and still practice the traditional death rituals.

Be that as it may, a man forewarned, is a man forearmed, goes the adage. Since I had identified these shortcomings, and any more that were likely to surface during the study, and how they could influence my research and its outcome, before the fieldwork, I was always conscious of them, and found ways of monitoring and keeping them under check.

1.13 CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

It is important to explain key terms used in a piece of writing. This explanation gives the reader an understanding of what the writer's conception of the words or phrases used, and the perspective through which the terms should be understood. This section explores four terms or phrases, namely, rituals, death, the Karanga (Shona) of Nyajena, Karanga (Shona) Religion and Worldview, and cultural change.

1.13.1 Rituals

This study is about Karanga death rituals, and it is important to give an outline of the study's understanding of the meaning and significance of rituals from a general point of view.

Cunningham and others (1995: 79) have defined a ritual as “a ceremonial act or repeated stylized gesture used for specific occasions.” From this definition's point of view, there are many ordinary rituals in ordinary life, such as the way we greet people, wake up every morning, eat and drink, rejoice, build our homes, grieve, die, and honor the deceased. Some rituals have become part of our everyday lives that we do not even notice them. However, other rituals are so special that we have to learn how to perform them, and we may be punished or ostracized if we do not perform them appropriately. Religious rituals have actions that “connect the individual and the community to the sacred reality, (Esposito and others, 2002: 7).

Rituals have certain characteristics that make them recognizable when they occur. All rituals have a history of their inception and transmission, as Brodd and others (2016: 20) have noted. Adherents can go back to their historical archives or oral traditions to find out the date on which

certain rituals started, and how or why they were incepted. Rituals have a tradition, which means the transmission of culture and religious beliefs and practices from one generation to the next. According to Esposito and others (2002: 7), the traditions include actions that try to reenact the stories that are passed on from generation to the next. Hence, Esposito and others (2002: 8) claim that the religious stories (myths) and the symbolic reenactment of the stories (rituals) are closely connected. Rituals dramatize the myths. That which was passed on from one generation to the next, sometimes changes because of acculturation, which Gittins (2016: 59) defines as the encounter between two or more cultures, whose outcome could be mutual or unequal give and take of cultural practices and values.

Most rituals use symbols such as kneeling, standing, clapping of hands, crosses, and so on, which the adherents can interpret in more or less the same way. There is symbolic food, drink, gestures such as kneeling, crying, standing, sitting, and so on. These ritual symbols are attempts “to frame, interpret, and give meaning to the world,” (Cunningham and others, 1995: 92). Although, the gestures may slightly differ as per demands of each community, the similarities far outweigh the differences. Repetition is another key feature of rituals. The sacred gestures, words, or actions should be repeated accurately and uniformly in every similar ritual to foster uniformity. Hence, some religious traditions have written documents that contain prayers and hymns to foster uniformity in their celebration. Repetition enables adherents to memorize and internalize the ritual, and it gives the ritual its form and identity. The memorization prevents any unwarranted changes to rituals. Although African Traditional Religions are not too rigid concerning the wording of the rituals, it is insisted that the meaning and spirit of the ritual be maintained.

Every ritual demands the active participation of the participants and their ritual leaders.

According to Mbiti (1969: 118), some rituals have physical drama and impact, and the drama is didactic in nature. Cunningham and others (1995: 80) assert that this dramatization of rituals may be an attempt to reenact the original activity such as the Christian Last Supper, or the creation of the world. The participation may be in the form of song, dance, eating sacred food, or mere responses. Once a ritual is performed, there should be some mystical satisfaction in the participants. If the participants do not get anything out of rituals, they would not perform them. In addition to that, some rituals demand some abstinence from food or sexual intercourse before they are performed.

Kesler (2003: 114) contends that “sacrifice plays such a central role in so many different rituals,” and is a theme that permeates most religious teachings and practices. Kesler (2003: 114) lists many examples of sacrifices that accompany rituals such as slaying of animals for their blood or meat, and the offering of vegetables or cultural products. In some religions, fruits, cloths, blankets, weapons, and so on are also sacrificed in rituals. For Kesler (2003:114), every sacrifice has four elements, namely, the participants, the sacrificial animal, vegetable, artefact, object, “the mode of sacrifice, and those who receive the sacrifice.”

Rituals serve a purpose in people’s lives. Some rituals, such as weddings, ordinations, and circumcision, give individuals the courage and authority to face new social roles that accompany the different stages of physical and intellectual development at which they are in the community. Mbiti (1969: 118) writes, “Another great significance of the rites is to introduce the candidates to

adult life: they are now allowed to share in the full privileges and duties of the community.”

They also acquire a new responsibility, education, and rights, and are introduced to the life of the living-dead, (Mbiti, 1969: 118).

Some rituals assist the spirit of the deceased in entering the realm of spirits by purifying them after burial. This study deals with death rituals, which help the bereaved to cope with their loss, and also assist the spirit of the departed to enter the ancestral realm. Some rituals foster a spirit of fraternity among the people who perform them together. Some rituals give the participants the same identity. For example, the people who are baptized into a particular Christian denomination acquire a similar religious identity by virtue of that same baptism received. Rituals also entertain because of dance, song, and food that in most cases accompany rituals. As Brodd and others (2016: 82) have observed, “The rituals surrounding death are not always sad, and they may even be joyful.” Some rituals are a means of communication, which allows the living members of a family to communicate with supper sensible realities, or the other way around. Other rituals are used to consecrate people or places for sacred offices or usage.

There are several types of rituals, but the majority of scholars concur that about three of them are fundamental, namely, crisis, calendrical, and rites of passage. Crisis rituals are also known as rites of affliction because they focus on misfortunes and calamities in the community, such as illness, barrenness, drought, war, bad luck, death, failure, and many others. Their celebration is decided by the challenges that the society is facing at that particular time. They are not on the calendar. Examples of such rituals are death rituals. Death comes when it wants to come.

Calendrical rituals occur at set times according to the seasonal calendar of the believers. Usually, believers know when such rituals would be celebrated, and they thoroughly, prepare for them. Examples of calendrical rituals can be drawn from New Year celebrations. Life cycle rituals are also known as rites of passage, a term that is believed to have been coined by Arnold van Gennep. Gennep (1960: 3) defines them as “ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined.” In support of that, Ludwig (2001: 51) says that there are four critical passages of life, which are birth, puberty, marriage, and death, and these should be ritualized to indicate “the separation from the previous state, the encounter with sacred power in the transitional liminal period, and the reincorporation into the community at the next level of human life.” Rites of passage are also performed to mark different stages in human physical, spiritual, and mental development. In his list of life cycle rites, Gennep (1960: 3) includes “birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, initiation into religious societies, and funerals.”

This study dealt with death rituals, which assist the bereaved to transition to a life without the deceased member of the family. They also “incorporate the deceased into the world of the dead,” and are elaborate and assigned the greatest importance in many religious traditions, (Gennep, 1960: 146).

1.13.2 Death

Although there is no universally acceptable definition of death, most medical practitioners agree that, “a person is dead when he has irreversibly lost all capacity to integrate and coordinate the physical and mental functions of the body,” (O’Rooke, 1999: 78), quoting the Pontifical Council

Cor Unum of Ethics Regarding the Fatally Ill and Nurses (1981: 20–23). O’Rooke (1999: 78) quoting the *Pontifical Council Cor Unum of Ethics Regarding the Fatally Ill and Nurses* (1981: 20–23), contends that the immediate signs of death are the spontaneous cessation of cardiac and respiratory functions, and the verification of “an irreversible cessation of every brain function.” Sankar (1991: 150–151) has given a list of signs of approaching death, namely; the loss of sensation, motion, and reflexes, the becoming cold of arms and legs, more sleep, confusion, sight failure, loss of bowel and urine control, increase in oral secretions, restlessness, appetite decrease, and irregular breathing.

“Death is a very solemn event fraught with danger for both the deceased and the living; hence, precaution must be taken to ensure that everything is done properly,” Imasogie, (1985: 60). Most people fear death because it reminds them of their physical limitedness and finitude. Hence, every culture has euphemisms used for death. Some of them are passing away, kicking the bucket, buying a farm, being called home, running a good race, resting, going before us, is no more, is gone, and so on. According to Corr, Nabe, and Corr (1997: 87), the euphemisms are intended to prettify death.

Apart from the fear, it is deeply ingrained in human nature that the dead have to be revered, as Mayer (2006: 4) has rightly stated. Many rituals are performed for the dead. These have two major functions. First, they help the bereaved to progressively cope with grief. Scholars, such as Pine (1974: 37–38) affirm that there are about five stages of grief that the bereaved should be helped to go through. These are: disbelief when the message of death is communicated, anger that a beloved has died, desperation, and eventually resolution. For Praagh (2000: 13–15), there

are seven grief stages, namely, shock, denial, bargaining, anger, guilt, sadness or depression, and acceptance. Death rituals help the bereaved to move from each stage to the other. Second, death rituals prepare the dead to enter the realm of the dead. In most societies, these rituals should be performed meticulously to avoid upsetting the deceased and the ancestors. This study explored how these death rituals were and are performed by the Karanga of Nyajena, Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

1.13.3 The Karanga (Shona) of Nyajena

The Karanga of Nyajena are a segment of the Shona people who live in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa. Its population is approximately 15 million. It borders Zambia in the north, South Africa in the south, Mozambique in the east, and Botswana in the west. There are several ethnical groups in Zimbabwe each with its own slight cultural variation. Despite those minute dissimilarities, most of Zimbabwe's ethnicities linguistically fit into two principal groups—the Ndebele and the Shona. The Ndebele are said to have migrated from South Africa around 1840 and are mainly found in the Matabeleland Provinces, and Bulawayo, which is Zimbabwe's second-largest city. They constitute about a quarter of Zimbabwe's 15 million population, according to informal estimations.

The Shona, who constitute about three-quarters of Zimbabwe's population, comprise groups such as the Karanga in the south, Zezuru in central Zimbabwe, Korekore in the north, and Ndau and Manyika in the east. Rayner (1962: 20) asserts that the Shona are Bantu people who came from the North, a long time ago in a wave of migrations, which historians call, "Bantu Migration." However, he claims that the Shona have forgotten the circumstances surrounding

their arrival in Zimbabwe because nothing was recorded. All the information that is available concerning the Shona occupation of Zimbabwe is sourced from oral traditions.

There is no consensus among historians concerning how the people of Zimbabwe came to be known as “Shona people.” Rayner (1962: 41) claims that the name Shona is likely to have been derived from the Ndebele word, *Amasvina*, meaning the “Unwashed Ones,” which the Ndebele derogatorily used for the people they found in Zimbabwe upon their arrival from South Africa, in the 19th century. Bourdillon (1987: 17), supporting the same theory, postulates that the word *Shona* “appears to have been used first by the Ndebele as a defamatory name for the people they had defeated, particularly the Rozvi.” Just like Rayner’s theory, Bourdillon’s theory is based on the word *Masvina*. Both Rayner (1962: 41) and Bourdillon (1987: 17) concur that the name Shona was an imposition by the Ndebele, which was resented in the past, until it was popularized, and perhaps, sanitized by the British in their endeavor to find a unifying name for the indigenous people of Zimbabwe.

Mlambo (2014: 10) suggests a different derivation of the word, *Shona*. He alleges that it was a creation by the colonial rulers of Zimbabwe, the British, who occupied it in 1890. Eventually, the term was used to classify all the people of Zimbabwe who had a “similar linguistic, cultural, and political past,” Mlambo (2014: 10). This classification was enforced by the colonial education system that standardized Karanga, Zezuru, Makorekore, Nda, and Manyika to produce standard Shona, which is primarily based on Zezuru. The standardized Shona is still being studied in Zimbabwean schools, although more and more people advocate for the study of other ethnic languages in their own right. Even though Mlambo’s theory sounds plausible, it can only make

sense if used in collaboration with Bourdillon and Rayner's theories. The colonial administrators might not have created the term, *Shona* from nowhere. It came from somewhere. It is likely that the name, *Shona* was invented by the Ndebele, and was formalized and popularized by the colonial administrators, and reluctantly embraced by the named people.

Even though the derivation of the word *Shona* may be uncertain, the ethnicities that belong to the Shona ethnical group are known. As has been already mentioned, one of the major ethnical groups, which constitute the Shona peoples are the Karanga, whose current habitat, Masvingo, the then Fort Victoria, is in the southern part of the country. Hence, the derogatory word, "*Mavhitori*," (people from Fort Victoria) is sometimes applied to people who come from this area. Mlambo (2014: 10) asserts that the Karanga's presence in Masvingo goes back to the Great Zimbabwe civilization of about the 13th to the 16th centuries. The Karanga have several clans, each with its own principal identity that is derived from its totem. Some of the clans are Bikita, Chivi, Gutu, Mwenezi, Zaka, Masvingo, and Chiredzi.

This study was done in Nyajena, the then Nyajena Tribal Trust Land, which is found in the southern part of Masvingo. According to Gelfand (1962: 2), Nyajena lies 60 miles southeast of Masvingo, and its area originally covered about 136 000 acres. However, it should be noted that more land was added to Nyajena starting in 1980, at Zimbabwe's independence, with the introduction of the government's "willing seller and willing buyer" Land Resettlement Scheme, which saw thousands of black people being resettled in the land that was originally owned by white farmers. People from Nyajena acquired land in the former Makosi River Ranch, which was owned by the Anglo-American Corporation. More so, the compulsory land acquisition led by the

then and late president of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert Mugabe, which started in 2000, also witnessed more land being acquired for the Nyajena people at Mavhumatema, near Triangle.

Nyajena borders Zaka in the east, Chiredzi in the south, Chivi in the west, and Mushawasha Native Purchase Land in the north. The paramount chief of Nyajena is called Nyajena, a name that goes back to one of the progenitors of the group. In the past, Chief Nyajena was assisted by three headmen (*sadunhu*) namely, Maregere, Marebe, and Magudu. Currently, it seems that only Maregere and Magudu have remained influential. The people of Nyajena identify with Moyo (cow heart) totem. According to Freud (1918: 2), “As a rule it (a totem) is an animal, either edible and harmless, or dangerous and feared; more rarely the totem is a plant or a force of nature (rain, water), which stands in a peculiar relation to the whole clan. The totem is first of all the tribal ancestor of the clan, as well as its tutelary spirit and protector; . . .” Among the Shona, totems are hereditary through the paternal line. Every totem has a prayer or poem of praises, which is used for the people who belong to that totem. The Vajena’s totemic poem is as follows:

TABLE 1.1¹

SHONA

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Maita Moyo	Thank you, Moyo.
Maita Chirandu	Thank you, Chirandu.
Gono ren'ombe, chiri mudanga	The bull in the kraal.

¹ This totemic poem of the Vajena was compiled by Phil Guzha, and is used here with his permission. However, all Vajena know the poem, and accept it as their authentic totemic poem. It may have been composed by the progenitors of the clan. The English translation is mine.

Maita Gavhure Mariro	Thank you, Gavhure.
Maita Nyangasere	Thank you, Nyangasere.
Vachirera nherera	One who cares for orphans.
Vanorera nedzavamwe	He who cares for other people's orphans.
Maita vari Chimbete	Thank you, those in Chimbete.
Vari Marevesa	Those in Marevesa.
Maita mushayachirashwa	Thank you, Mushayachiraswa.
Nyama tinodya	We eat the meat.
Ganda tinokakisa ngoma	We use the skin to make drums.
Nyanga tichiveza makonan'ombe	We make snuff containers from horns.
Mwise tichisvaisa nhunzi	We chase away flies using the tail.
Maita Ganyamatope	Thank you, Ganyamatope.
Gonyohori, Matake	Gonyohori, Matake.
Vakatakira machende paruware	He, who crushed his testicles on a rock.
Maita mushenjere weJena, usina pakaminama	Thank you, the straight pole of the Vajena.
Kuti paminama potasanugwa nemhata	If crooked, the woman will straighten it.
Maita Moyo	Thank you, Moyo.
Maita Mirambwi	Thank you, Mirambwi.
Maita mhuru yaGavhu	Thank you, the calf of Gavhure.
Maita Chirandu	Thank you, Chirandu.

Gelfand (1966: 5) states that the founder of Nyajena was Nyanga, who migrated from Mazungunye. Originally, he belonged to the Moyo of the Rozvi totem. Gavhure, his eldest son, succeeded him as the chief. Gelfand (1966: 5) claims that Gavhure had three sons: Muchibwa, Marivadze (Nyajena), and Mupfurashanga. Mupfurashanga had four sons, namely, Gwaendepi (Mukarudzi), Mapfekera, Muvango, and Murinini.

Tichagwa (2008: 24), quoting the *Delineation Report for Nyajena Tribal Trust Land* of 1965, claims that the Vajena trace their kinship to the Jiri of Bikita, and Chief Bota of Zaka. Tichagwa (2008: 20) states that the Vajena's principal families are Nyajena, Mudarikwa (son of Nyajena), and Maregere. Tichagwa says that the house of Mudarikwa, which consists of the families of Mavuku, Chikwadze, Maramwidze, Muganyi, Makumbe, and Mundingi, has the primary religious task of rainmaking. So, during years of drought, they used to send emissaries to Matonjeni to ask for the rain. Matonjeni was the national shrine of the Shona God (Mwari), located near Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city. According to Tichagwa, Maregere, who is considered a son by Nyajena, is the headman of the area called Nyamande, and it is said that he has, in the past, clashed with Chief Nyajena regarding jurisdictional issues.

Other oral traditions, support Gelfand's claim that the Vajena came from the Duma of Mazungunye. Such oral traditions claim that Gavhure was excommunicated by Mazungunye after he had committed the abominable and pernicious offence of incest with his sister. Tichagwa (2008: 26) quoting Bogomas (1970), alleges that Gavhure indeed married his sister and fled home, and resettled on Chitakai Mountain, in the area later called Nyajena, where he established a dynasty. The *chidavo* (sub-totem) Murambwi, which can be translated as "the Rejected One" is

claimed to have originated from Gavhure's incest that led to his expulsion by Mazungunye. It is believed that upon his arrival in the new land, Gavhure conquered the people who already lived in the Nyajena area. However, there is no agreement as to the identity of the people who were vanquished by Gavhure. It is likely that the Vajena people co-existed with the indigenous people of Nyajena since they were not powerful and numerous enough to completely subdue the original inhabitants of the area they later renamed, Nyajena.

Even though the Vajena are the dynastic rulers of Nyajena, there are many other Karanga groups, which live among them. These other inhabitants of Nyajena can only be identified and differentiated from the Vajena by their totems. Some of them belong to the following totems: Shoko (monkey/baboon), Shumba (Lion), Dube (Zebra), Nungu (Porcupine) Shava (Eland), and many others. There are also the non-Shona ethnicities such as VaRemba, who are scattered in Nyajena and other areas of Zimbabwe. There are also Hlengwe people of Magudu. There is no clear answer concerning the origin of these non-Vajena people in Nyajena. Some of these people may have been found living in the area that became Nyajena. Others may have migrated to Nyajena later after the dynasty had been founded. Hence, it is important to emphasize that while this study is about the people of Nyajena, it is not only about the Vajena people who are technically the only members of the Nyajena aristocracy, but it is about the people of different totemic groups that consider Nyajena as their ancestral home. These people share the same cultural, religious, and social aspects of their lives with the Vajena. They perform and celebrate death rituals together.

1.13.4 The Karanga Religion and Worldview

The Karanga of Nyajena subscribe to the Shona version of African Traditional Religion, which is the indigenous faith of most people in Africa. Scholars of religion do not have a consensus as to the nomenclature given to this religious tradition. Some scholars claim that the name of the religion of Africans is too contentious in the sense that it includes three terms whose definitions are controversial and can be understood subjectively. For instance, there is no scholarly agreement concerning the meaning of the word African. Some have tried to use color as a defining factor in the identity of Africans, but this perspective has been challenged by the fact that some Africans such as Egyptians, Libyans, and a few others may be considered to be white. More so, most of them have become predominantly Muslims.

Furthermore, the adjective ‘traditional,’ which is part of the name, can be understood both negatively and positively. On the one hand, it can mean something old-fashioned and less desirable. On the other hand, it may refer to something primary, very important, and cherished. Therefore, some scholars are not comfortable with the use of the word, “traditional” in the name of the religion of Africans. As if that is not contentious enough, some scholars such as Hall, Pilgrim, and Cavanagh (1986: 5–9) have found the word “religion” very difficult to define conclusively and clearly. The trio explored several definitions of religion that were propounded by other scholars and concluded that most of them were wanting due to their vagueness, narrowness, compartmentalization, or prejudice. In other words, the explored definitions either do not sufficiently capture the essence of religion as understood by the adherents of diverse religious traditions or are too focused on an aspect of religion to the exclusion of many other significant attributes of religion. Smith (1963: 17) insists that the plurality of religious traditions

makes it difficult to find a conclusive and definitive definition of religion. In support of the arguments concerning the difficulties of attaining a definition of religion that satisfies everybody, Idowu (1975: 69, 70) predicts that scholars of religion are at the verge of giving up the pursuit.

As if the challenges concerning the definitions of the constituent words used in the name of this religion are not complicated enough, there is another controversy, which concerns whether Africans have a homogenous or heterogenous religion. On the one hand, scholars such as J. S. Mbiti, J. V. Taylor, E. B. Idowu, L. Magesa, and several others believe that African Traditional Religion is homogenous. Magesa (1997: 16, 170) holds that although there are varieties of the expression of African Traditional Religion, the basic beliefs are similar. According to Mbiti (1990: 2), there are many commonalities in African belief. For instance, they have a common conception of God, morality, rituals, cosmology, and so on. While these scholars acknowledge the existence of differences, they maintain that these should be downplayed. Hence, African Traditional Religion is one faith, that has several variations as dictated by the contextual and cultural needs of a given people. On the other hand, there are scholars who insist that Africans do not have a homogenous religion. Each ethnical group has its own version of religious beliefs and practices. Even within one ethnic group, the religious practices and beliefs vary according to clans and families. Therefore, the name of the religion should be African Traditional Religions, in the plural.

Hence, some scholars have advocated for a new name for the religion of Africans that would avoid the word "traditional." Scholars such as M. F. C. Bourdillon, T. Shoko, and many others have derived the name of the religion from some specific ethnicities such as Shona, Karanga,

Igbo, Zulu, Nda, and so on. Some of the suggested names are African religion, African Indigenous religion, African Traditions, Karanga Traditional Religion, Zulu Indigenous Religion, Igbo Traditional Religion, and many others. It should be noted that there is no consensus concerning the nomenclature of the religions of Africans. Be that as it may, whatever name is used for this religion, it captures a part of its essence.

Some of these disagreements stem from the demonization that African Traditional Religion suffered at the hands of Western scholarship. P'Bitek (1979: 15) accuses the Western scholarship of African Religion as being influenced by the Westerners' dichotomized worldview, which professed their own as "civilized, great, developed," and the non-Westerners' worldviews, as "uncivilized, simple, and undeveloped." Hence many derogatory and prejudicial terms were used by early Western scholars for Africans and their religion. Quarcoopome (1987: 46: 51) explains how biased and prejudicial, terms such as Paganism, Heathenism, Fetishism, Idolatry, Animism, and Polytheism are. He takes time to explain why Western scholars were wrong in their perception of the religion of Africans. The religion was also termed, ancestor worship, a term which is said to be the brainchild of Hebert Spencer. Mbiti (1990: 9) vehemently disagrees with its usage to refer to the traditional religion of Africa. Mbiti (1990: 9) calls its use, "blasphemous" because Africans do not worship ancestors, but only offer them hospitality, respect, and honor.

Despite all the controversies concerning the African Traditional Religion, many scholars concur concerning the nature and essence of African spirituality, its practices, and beliefs. Mbiti (1990: 2) asserts that Africans are notoriously spiritual, for they carry their religion wherever they go. He (1990: 2) writes, "Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields

where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament.” They live their religion. Mbiti (1975: 53) postulates that Africans are deeply prayerful people, and they pray for wealth and prosperity. For Africans, wealth includes, cattle, sheep, and goats, for they provide milk, meat, sacrifices, and payment of bridewealth. That is why Africans believe that bridewealth, wives, and children, as Kuper (1982: 16, 26) observes, come from their ancestors. In agreement with Mbiti, Chitakure (2017: 2–3) contends that the spirituality of the Africans in general, and the Shona, in particular, focuses on three pillars, which are prosperity, good health, and longevity. Prosperity is important because it promotes good health, and good health leads to a long life. Wealthy people can appease the good spirits, in exchange for protection. They can also exorcise bad spirits if need be. More so, the Shona do everything in their power to promote good health. They work hard in their fields to produce enough food for their families’ nourishment. They also solicit for the help of good spirits to protect their families from the never-ending onslaught by evil spirits.

Of course, the good spirits do not give this protection for nothing; they offer it in exchange for recognition, appeasement, and honor. It is believed that if the benevolent spirits withdraw their protection, their family members become vulnerable to all kinds of misfortunes, including death. The Shona understand death as “simply a transition like any other, and the dead man is not one who has been struck off the roll, nor even one who has been reincarnated but at most one who has returned and, as a rule, who is still present,” as Van der Leeuw (1967: 213) has aptly put it.

Although death is understood as a continuation of this physical life, albeit in the spiritual form, the Shona try to prevent it from happening. They are also afraid of it.

Since the Karanga of Nyajena are a branch of the Shona people, and the Shona being Africans, their cosmology and worldview are strikingly like that of most Africans. The African cosmology is inhabited by spirits and human beings. The invisible spiritual members and the visible physical members constitute the African community. Mbiti claims that African spirits are ubiquitous. Some of these spirits are good, while others are malevolent, unpredictable, and malicious. Included among the good spirits are God, ancestors, and some alien spirits. The evil spirits include some alien spirits and *zvidhoma*. In support of Mbiti, Kalu (2000: 56) postulates that the African cosmology is replete with both good and evil spirits, and human beings must maneuver them to “tap the resources of the benevolent spirits to ward off the machinations of the devouring spirits.”

Likewise, human beings can be good or evil, just like the spirits. The vilest human beings are the witches who are people who possess mysterious powers, which they use to harm others secretly. Most Africans believe that sickness and death can be caused by either good or evil spirits, and evil human beings, particularly, witches.

1.13.5 Cultural Change

Etymologically, the word “culture” is derived from the Latin verb *colere*, which may mean to cultivate the ground, and the phrase, *cultura animi*, meaning cultivation of the souls eventually came into being, (United State Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2014: 8). So, culture

means that which shapes the human being as specifically human, (USCCB, 2014: 8). Many cultural anthropologists agree that it is difficult to come up with an inclusive, definitive, and conclusive definition of culture. However, the failure to find a universally acceptable definition of culture has not deterred scholars from propounding functional definitions that help users to explore and comprehend the cultural topics under investigation. Driven by the same spirit, Law (1993: 4) defines culture as the “the values, beliefs, arts, food, customs, clothing, family and social organizations, and government of a given people in a given period.” In support of Law’s definition, Lustig and Koester (2013: 25) describe culture as “a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.” Consequently, culture involves the total identity of a people: their values, food, songs, stories, dances, art, clothes, language, architecture, religion, politics, and their relationships with each other.

The USCCB (2014: 6) notes that culture has three distinct dimensions. First, “cultures have ideas and ways of expressing them, and these include beliefs about God and people, values, language, feelings, way of living. Second, cultures have behaviors, which include rules about morality. Third, cultures have material dimensions, such as art, architecture, and other tangible symbols.

All cultures are dynamic and imperfect, and this inevitable cultural dynamism can be either positive or negative as Kim (2014: 11) has noted. This cultural change is driven by several factors, one of which is acculturation. Shorter (1988: 7) defines acculturation as “the encounter between one culture and another, or the encounter between cultures,” which is “the principal

cause of cultural change.” This encounter of members of different cultures has been exacerbated by globalization, which Schreiter (1997: 5) has described as having something to do with “the increasingly interconnected character of the political, economic, and social life of the peoples of this planet.” Although no particular period can be identified as the starting of the process of globalization in Africa, scholars agree that the colonization of the African countries by Europeans brought the African and European cultures into an encounter where the African cultures were condemned as inferior, primitive, and worthless. The British who colonized Zimbabwe in 1890, condemned most of the Zimbabwean cultures, including religious practices and imposed their own as a superior culture, a phenomenon, which Shorter (1988: 8) calls “cultural imperialism or dominance.” Hence, the cultural change that happened among the Shona people because of their forced encounter with the Europeans was lopsided. In other words, the Shona or Karanga have been alienated from their own culture. The colonialists managed to do this by the continual demonization of the Shona cultures, and the promotion of their own through the educational systems that they introduced, and Christianity, which they portrayed as “the” religion.

This study is concerned about identifying the cultural changes concerning death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena. It observed that although some Karanga religious death practices have remained constant, many have changed. It should be noted that, not all cultural change is toxic for culture is dynamic, and change is inevitable. However, any cultural or religious change that is imperialistic in nature is destructive to a people’s identity. The identification of some of these cultural changes may lead the Karanga people to a process of ethnification. Schreiter (1997: 23) defines ethnification as “the process of rediscovering a forgotten identity based on one’s cultural

ties,” and is about “the assertion of a local identity, especially amid the experience of social change and cultural instability.” This study observed that the unearthing of the traditional death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena is not an easy task because of the cultural hybridization caused by the encounter between Karanga culture and other cultures.

As has been alluded to above, this study makes two significant assumptions about the meaning of culture, which are important to mention at this juncture. First, the study understands religion as an aspect of culture. In other words, the religion of a people is a part of that people’s culture. Second, what is attributed to religion is also attributed to culture. However, there is more to culture than just religion. Hence, Gittins (2015: 35–45) in addition to religion as an aspect of culture, explores other aspects of culture such as material culture, symbolic culture, moral culture, and institutional culture, which are connected to religion in one way or the other. This study was about Karanga death rituals, which are an aspect of the religious aspect of the Karanga culture.

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I sought written approval to carry out this study from the Research Ethics Review Committee of The College of Human Sciences at Unisa, after having meticulously perused the Unisa Research Policy, Unisa Ethics Policy, and Unisa IP Policy. This permission was granted. The Unisa Procedures for Master’s and Doctoral Degrees (2015, Chapter 7: 7.1) stipulates that “All research involving human participants, data, animals, or other living or genetically modified organisms must have ethics clearance from an appropriate Research Ethics Committee.”

Spradley (1980 (2016): 20) emphasizes that ethical considerations are pivotal in ethnographic studies because “informants are human beings with problems, concerns, and interests,” and this acknowledgment compels ethnographers to safeguard the interviewees’ “rights, interests, and sensitivities.” According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 195), ethical considerations traverse the life of every ethnographic research project, and should include the research questions, the choice of the research population, the data collection methods, the recruitment of participants, and the publication of the research outcome.

Fieldwork requires the critical ethical consideration to uphold the informed consent of the investigated people, respecting that people have a right to know that they are subjects of research. The participants were notified of the purpose and nature of the research, and that their participation would be voluntary, and they could withdraw from it if they felt that they could no longer continue. The Unisa, Policy on Research Ethics (2013:Part 2, 1.2, v) warns the researcher that “Direct or indirect coercion, as well as undue inducement of people in the name of research should be avoided,” because these impede “autonomous decision making,” and may compel people to participate in the research even though it might be “against their better judgement.” To run away from that pitfall, I informed the participants of possible risks that they could encounter in participating in this study, and how I intended to “minimize and mitigate” the risks as advised by the Unisa, Policy on Research Ethics, (2013: Part 2, 1.2, ix). The Unisa, Policy on Research Ethics (2013: Part 2, 1.2, iv) requires researchers to assure the participants of the right to privacy, or to remain anonymous, which is a paramount ethical principle in ethnographic research. The right to privacy includes changing respondents’ names, names of places, and any other

identifying features. I also gave assurance to the participants that the data they provided me would be stored in a secure place until it is eventually destroyed.

Ethnographers should not exploit the respondents in any way. Spradley, (1980 (2016): 24) states that “Every ethnographer bears a responsibility to weigh carefully what might constitute a “fair return” to informants.” The respondents that I interviewed were compensated for the time or effort expended within the confines of the Unisa, Policy on Research Ethics (2013: Part 2.7), which stipulates that the “reimbursement of expenses (e.g., transport costs, meals) or compensation for time or effort expended or opportunity lost is allowed, on condition that all participants are offered similar rewards and that such rewards are aimed at recompensing only.” They will also benefit from the results of the research since a copy of the research description will be made available to them upon request, within the regulations of Unisa.

Finally, this study assured the respondents of ethical publication, which prescribes that no harm should be done to the research subjects as advised by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 203). Ethical consideration involves the safeguarding of field notes and preservation of anonymity of the respondents. Finally, I understood that competency for ethical research was a responsibility that was expected of me by my research supervisor and professors at Unisa, since “researchers should be professionally and personally qualified for the research as stipulated by the Unisa, Policy on Research Ethics, (2013: Part 2, 1.2, iii).

1.15 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This study is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the study from a general point of view. The second section provides the methodological framework by which data was collected and analyzed. It includes an abstract, research problem and question, the context of the research problem, justification, purpose and objectives of the study, qualitative research method, and the philosophical perspective through which the topic under investigation was approached. The third section deals with qualitative research data collection methods that were employed, such as interviews and participant observation, and sampling, data analysis, data verification, and ethical considerations. The fourth section defines and clarifies the key terms and concepts that have been used.

Chapter 2 reviews the available literature on the causes of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena in particular, and the Shona or African people in general. In most normal cases, sickness precedes death, and consequently, to understand Karanga death rituals, one needs to delve into its causes. The causes of sickness and death that this chapter explores are witchcraft, evil spirits, familiars (*zvidhoma*), ancestors, avenging spirits (*ngozi*), alien spirits, and God. Chapter 3 continues with the literature review that has already been started in chapter 2, and it deals with Shona death rituals as recorded in the available literature. Among the Karanga, death is a solemn event that is marked by rituals that must be meticulously performed. The type of the appropriate ritual to be performed is dictated by the age, sex, or status of the person who is being buried.

This chapter probes into the Karanga rituals for the deceased at different stages in human development, such as premature babies, infants, single people, married adults, chiefs, people dying away from home, foreigners without relatives, and old people. It describes the types and significance of rituals that are performed at each burial. The rituals are divided into three basic categories, namely, pre-burial, burial, and post-burial rituals. Pre-burial rituals include rituals such as folding of hands and legs, the closing of eyes, the onset of mourning, singing, dancing, the ritual goat (goat of *nhevedzo*), ritual donation (*chema*), washing and clothing the corpse, and food. The burial rituals involve marking the grave, digging the grave, carrying stones, carrying the corpse to the grave, placing the body and items into the grave, sweeping around the grave, speeches, and the cleansing of the gravediggers. Post-burial rituals explore *mahakurimwi* (days of rest), *mashopeshope*, (consulting about the cause of death) *kubata nokugova nhumbi* (cleansing and distribution of personal property), *masuka foshoro* (cleansing of the tools), *doro remvura* (ritual to quench the thirst of the deceased) *kurova guva (kugadzira)* (cleansing ceremony), *zita* (inheritance of the name of the dead), inheritance of estate and wives, *kuruka and kucheka rukanda* (making and cutting the ritual bangle) and the instalation of the ancestral bull.

Chapter 4 is one of the two chapters that deal with the research findings. The chapter reports research findings on causes of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena, pre-burial, and burial rituals. The chapter presents the biographical profile of the people interviewed for this study, and a tableted summary of the research findings. The last part of the chapter provides a detailed description of the research findings. This detailed narrative also includes the things that were observed by the researcher. Every ritual or theme has two components, namely, description

of the ritual and its significance. Lastly, the chapter discusses changes that have happened to some of the explored rituals.

Chapter 5 seeks to explore the post-burial rituals as understood and practiced by the Karanga of Nyajena. The Karanga believe that death is a process—the beginning of a new life, and not an end to life. Hence, post-burial rituals continue for several years after death. The following post-burial rituals are explored in this chapter as being performed by the Karanga of Nyajena: consulting a diviner about the cause of death, cleansing of undertakers, placing the stones on the grave, resting days, commiserating with the bereaved, distribution of personal belongings, distribution of estate, cleansing of tools, and the cleansing of weapons.

Chapter 6 provides a brief, pocketable, and intelligible manual of selected pre-burial, burial, and post-burial rituals. The manual provides clear instructions for a quick perusal by those who would want to follow the Karanga traditional burial procedures.

Finally, chapter 7 sums up the preceding chapters, and the findings of the inquiry, makes recommendations, and concludes the study.

1.16 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the topic under investigation by providing the research problem and questions, the context of the research problem, justification, aims and objectives of the study, research method, and the philosophical perspective through which the topic under investigation,

and ethical considerations. Finally, it has clarified the key terms and concepts to this study. It should be borne in mind that this study concerns death rituals as they are practiced by the Karanga of Nyajena, who are an ethnic group of the Shona people of Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: SHONA CAUSES OF SICKNESS AND DEATH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided the overall orientation of this study. Chapter 2 reviews the available literature on the causes of sickness, which may ultimately lead to death among Africans in general, and the Shona in particular. It also briefly explores healing among Shona peoples. This chapter prepares the reader for chapter 3, which is a literature review of the Shona death rituals themselves. Chapter 2 is important because, in most cases, death is preceded by sickness, and it is imperative that the causes of sickness, which may ultimately lead to death be surveyed here. Chapter 2 is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the Godly causes of sickness and death, the second section explores human causes of sickness and death, and the third section deals with spiritual causes of sickness and death, among the Shona peoples. The primary objective of chapter 2 is to give a prelude and foundation to the literature review of death rituals that will be dealt with in chapter 3. Death rituals can only be performed when death happens, and death can only occur if caused by something. Hence, this chapter seeks to present the findings of some of the scholars who have explored the causes of sickness and death among African peoples. The literature review has been done in two chapters so that the causes of sickness and death rituals can be presented separately for easy understanding. The gaps in knowledge will be explored in the conclusions of both chapters 2 and 3.

Among most African people, sickness or death does not just happen—there should be a cause, which is usually understood and interpreted through the concerned people's worldview. In the case of sickness, the ill person or his family usually seeks medical attention as soon as possible to restore his health. In addition to the medicines or therapy that the patient may receive from healers, he or his family usually wants to know the cause of his ill-health, if it is not yet known. Ordinarily, medical practitioners provide their patients with such information voluntarily. Hence, the cause of sickness is taken seriously by the Shona.

If the illness leads to the sick person's demise, it is natural for the deceased's relatives to consult a diviner to learn the cause of the death, if the information is not yet available at the time of death. The knowledge of the cause of illness by the patient, his relatives, and medical practitioners is crucial because it determines the kind of medical care that should be administered to him. If the sickness ends in the death of the ailing person, the awareness of its causes is important in avoiding deaths of the same nature in the future, if preventable. It is important to note that death is generally caused by sickness, unless it is accidental, suicidal, homicidal, or caused by war. In normal circumstances, the cause of death also refers to the cause of the sickness. However, for the Shona, even accidental and homicidal deaths, whose cause might be apparent to people with different worldviews, there is always another cause, possibly spiritual, that might be revealed by a diviner.

2. 2 GODLY CAUSES OF SICKNESS AND DEATH

The Shona believe in Mwari (God), who they claim to be the final authority above the ancestors as Daneel (1970: 15) has observed. Daneel (1970: 15) claims that in bygone times, Mwari was elaborately worshiped at the Matonjeni Shrine, near Bulawayo, and was largely consulted in times of drought or national crises. This aloofness of the Shona God caused some researchers such as Gelfand (1967: 20) to allege that God was remote and indifferent to the daily challenges faced by his adherents. Bhebe (1979: 19) claims that Mwari of Matonjeni opted to concentrate on national issues, and by so doing had little concern for the affairs of individuals. Kollbrunner (2001: 10) presents Fr. Rubio as having written to Fr. Kumbirai, asserting that the Shona prayed to their ancestors, who they considered the “masters of death and life,” not to God. This observation has been rebutted by other scholars who argue that this seemingly distant relationship between Mwari and the Shona people was not a result of his indifference but a consequence of his ability to delegate his authority to the ancestors, who took care of the daily needs of the Shona. In support of that, Thorpe (1992: 54–55) states that due to the Shona God’s authority, he was approached indirectly through “mediums representing ancestral spirits.” To prove that Mwari was active and immanent among the Shona, the people used praise names such as Nyadenga (owner of the skies), Musikavanhu (Creator of human beings), and Dzivaguru (The Great Pool), for him. These praise names reflected the work that God had already accomplished or was doing among his people.

The Shona, just like many other African ethnical groups, believe that some diseases and deaths come from God, although God is never seen as evil. Aschwanden (1987: 16) claims that the

death that comes from God is believed to be a consequence of humanity's misgivings. Since God is the creator of all that exists, he has the responsibility to make wayward human beings accountable for their shortcomings. The diseases or deaths caused by God can be classified into three major categories: harmless, everyday illnesses, death caused by natural forces, and death of older people.

2.2.1 Harmless, Everyday Illnesses

Starting with the small, everyday sicknesses, the Shona believe that these are harmless, and may not require serious medical attention. These include headaches, coughing, diarrhea, toothache, abscesses, small accidents, and many others. According to Aschwanden (1987: 16), since these ailments are usually harmless, they are considered to come from God. Chavhunduka (1994: 68) asserts that because of their regular occurrence and fleeting nature in the life of humans, these ailments are expected to resolve completely without the intervention by medical practitioners.

The Shona understand that most of these seasonal diseases are bound to happen. They know that children will have diarrhea when they are cutting their teeth, or at the onset of Spring. They understand that colds are common in Winter. They are aware that kids will suffer from chickenpox or measles at some stage during their development. They understand that kids will suffer bruises, will be pricked by thorns, and sometimes sustain small fractures. It is understood that if no other evil forces get involved in such ailments, the sick person will recuperate without any serious medical attention being sought. They even guess the period a particular ailment is going to linger on. They know the signs when the sickness is about to appear or disappear. They are also aware of sicknesses that can be spread to other people, and consequently, they take preventive measures.

Even though the Shona are aware of the Godly origin of such small diseases, most people know some herbs that may be used to alleviate the discomfort and pain that are caused by some of the small diseases. It goes without saying that *Zumbani* (*Lippia Javanica*), lemons, gumtree leaves, and numerous other herbs may be boiled and taken as a tea to alleviate the effects of common colds. In most cases, no one is expected to die from any of these diseases. It is only God who knows why such diseases must happen, and God cannot be brought to court for allowing these diseases to happen. In cases where such minor ailments seem to linger on more than expected, some Shona people may begin to suspect the involvement of witches or malicious spirits. Unless foul play is suspected, most people wait for God's healing, which always comes at the right time.

2.2.2 Old Age

Among the Shona, a long life is a sign of blessedness. Given a choice, many people would opt for longevity. However, the Shona understand that while some people are blessed with longevity, everyone is still mortal. There always comes a time when they will die. Sometimes, those who live long lives come to a point where they embrace their finitude and start wishing for death. When such people die, their relatives normally accept their deaths as the will of God. Of course, they may perform the *gata* (consulting a diviner), but it would be merely ceremonial unless there is foul play that they suspect. If they consult a diviner to learn the cause of death, they are likely to be told that the cause was old age (*kukura*) or God (*rufu gwaMwari*). Even though people dying of old age are mourned, there is usually a common understanding among the mourners that the departed are better off dead than alive.

2.2.3. Natural Deaths

Aschwanden (1987: 18) notes that some misfortunes or even deaths are believed by the Shona to be caused by nature or God in response to human disobedience. There are certain societal norms that people are expected to uphold unwaveringly, and those who transgress may be punished by God. Such deaths or misfortunes are blamed on the victims themselves because they are seen as deserving them. For instance, the Shona believe that a man who commits adultery is likely to be struck by lightning as a form of punishment from God because God controls it (lightning), (Bullock, 1913: 66). A woman who has committed adultery may die of childbirth unless she confesses her sins during labor. Those who work on the ancestral sacred day may also be punished in the same way. This ancestral sacred day is a day dedicated to the ancestors of the land, on which all the inhabitants of that land should rest in honor of the ancestors. No work is supposed to be done on that day. Murderers that have not been apprehended, may also suffer the same consequences.

However, natural causes of sickness are intimately related to Godly causes because they are seen as punishment from either God or the ancestors. So, ultimately, they are caused by God. They differ from Godly causes in that natural causes are a result of the victim's transgressions, and that they are meted out through nature. Godly causes are not a result of an individual's sins because God's time for them to happen would have come. Natural causes are punitive measures to compel individuals to uphold the moral standards of the community. In the eyes of the Shona people, transgressors of societal norms deserve to be punished, although, at times, the whole community may be affected by the punishment.

2.3 SPIRITUAL CAUSES

As has been alluded to already, the African universe is full of spirits, both good and bad. When a person becomes sick, both evil and good spirits are suspected until a diviner exonerates either group. If evil spirits are involved, the family of the sick person, with the help of traditional medical practitioners, may perform some form of exorcism or spiritual appeasement. If the illness is caused by any of the good spirits, the family of the ailing person may appease the aggrieved spirit if placatable. However, in cases where a good spirit has become notoriously malevolent, the family members have the option to ostracize it, in the same manner they would do to an evil spirit.

2.3.1 Evil Spirits

Evil spirits include spirits that may be related to the living family members, nameless and unrelated spirits, and *zvidhoma*. Chitakure (2017: 119) contends that *zvidhoma* are the spirits of people who die as children, and are resuscitated by the witches so that they can be their own evil spiritual children. Although *zvidhoma* are spiritual, the witches treat them as if they were their biological children. They may send them to run their malicious errands, some of which may result in the victimized people becoming sick or even dying. They are believed to participate in witches' ghoulish nocturnal parties where they devour human flesh, which they would have exhumed from the graves. According to Crawford (1967: 118), *chitupwani* or *chidhoma* is believed to be the spirit of someone who has died, and is then raised by the witches, which they use to strike other people. Crawford (1967: 118) thinks that the age of the dead person does not

matter because witches can snatch the spirit of anyone that they want and change it into *chidhoma*.

Although the *zvidhoma* phenomenon is not very common in other parts of Africa, Parrinder (1970: 133) refers to the spirits of the dead, which are snatched away by witches on their way to the spirit world and are turned into ghosts. These spirits are believed to be sent by their owners to beat up people. They can be deadly unless immediate intervention by traditional medical practitioners is sought. It seems that Parrinder is referring to the same *zvidhoma*, although the Shona do not consider them to be ghosts. For the Shona, ghosts are harmless spirits of the dead that may appear to have a physical body, and are known to reside at a certain place or area.

The Shona also believe in the existence of nameless evil spirits, popularly known as *mamhepo*, which literally means “winds.” These nameless spirits are ubiquitous and may cause misfortunes, illnesses, and death. Evil spirits can be exorcized by traditional medical practitioners if they have taken possession of an individual. According to Gelfand (1966: 72), these strong destructive “winds” can be eliminated by consulting a diviner, who then drives medicinal pegs into the soil at the four corners of the affected village or homestead. These medicinal pegs would prevent the evil “winds” from entering the homestead. Magesa (1997: 176) reports of some malevolent spirits, which he describes as the spirits of the people who were not accorded a conventional burial, and spirits of children who would have died before going through initiation. For him, these spirits may be responsible for bringing disorder and disharmony in families. He advocates for their expulsion from their families of origin, for they are good for nothing.

2.3.2 Avenging Spirits

The Shona demand moral uprightness of all the people, and anyone found wanting in this respect is liable to punishment by the community or the spirits. Certain violations of the moral code go undetected by the societal leaders but can never escape the never-failing scrutiny by the spiritual eyes. In some cases, the punishment comes from the spirit of the offended person. Hence, offenses such as disrespect and neglect of one's parents, murder, and failure to pay what one owes to others are offenses that attract the wrath of the *ngozi* (avenging spirit).

According to Aschwanden (1987: 38), the Shona word *ngozi* is derived from the word *njodzi*, “meaning danger, sorrow, misfortune.” Bourdillon (1987: 233) defines *ngozi* as an angry, difficult to appease, and terrifying spirit, which “attacks suddenly and harshly,” causing death and serious illness among the relatives of the person who would have offended it. The spirit may be of a person who was murdered, or a person who died before receiving his remuneration, or that of a mother who was disrespected by any of her children, which comes back to haunt the perpetrator in search of justice. The relationship between the Shona people and *ngozi* is contextual. To the spirit's family, *ngozi* is considered an ancestor seeking justice and reparations for a wrong done, but for the perpetrator's family, it is a malignant spirit, which chastises even the innocent. Hence, *ngozi* is probably the most feared spirit among the Shona.

There are several types of *ngozi*. Gelfand (1959: 153) states that there are four types of *ngozi*, namely, murdered person, unpaid servant, marital spirit, and ill-treated parent; the most vengeful and unrelenting being that of a murdered person. Although there are other ways of dealing with *ngozi*, Gelfand (1966: 70) asserts that “the cure lies in making adequate recompense to the

descendants of the murdered person.” Usually, the family of an individual who is seriously ill, or who has died consults a diviner who mentions *ngozi* as the culprit. This consultation of a diviner is necessary because of two challenges. First *ngozi* may delay its attack for generations as Daneel (1971: 135) has noted. At the historical point at which the attacks start, those who knew about the murder or ill-treatment of a laborer would have died. Usually, they would not have told anyone of the murder. Second, sometimes the murder is only known by the perpetrator, who may have kept it a secret. In this case, the family learns about it from the diviner, who, most of the times, is successful in encouraging the perpetrator to confess the murder.

Symptoms of *ngozi* attacks include serious illness, unexplainable deaths, misfortunes, and mental disorders. Daneel (1971: 135) thinks that mental disorders are the most frequent symptoms of an avenging spirit. Bourdillon (1987: 225), quoting Crawford (1967: 80), claims that the family of the aggrieved spirit may try to enforce the payments of the compensation by “raising or awakening” the spirit of their aggrieved family member against the family of the offender. They may provoke the spirit by performing rituals at the grave of the deceased as per the instructions of a diviner.

There are several remedies that those affected by an avenging spirit may employ to counteract the situation. Daneel (1971: 138) explores three possible solutions. According to him, the family being tormented by *ngozi* may, through the assistance of a traditional medical practitioner, redirect the wronged spirit back to its people. It is believed that a powerful diviner can instruct the spirit to attack its own people. Second, the diviner may instruct the family of the perpetrator to pay compensation to the relatives of the deceased. This compensation can be in the form of

cows, goats, cash, or even human beings, particularly a wife. The woman who is given away as recompense for *ngozi* is required to live with the family of the murdered person. One of her responsibilities is to sweep the hut built for the *ngozi*, closer to the home of the deceased's family homestead. If the compensation involves beasts, at least one of them is slaughtered to propitiate the aggrieved spirit. Daneel (1971: 38) asserts that some families accept the compensation begrudgingly because of the vindictiveness of *ngozi*, which can easily afflict its own people with disease if something is not done properly. The third remedy, which a diviner may recommend is an exorcism of the angry spirit. According to Daneel (1971: 139), this exorcism can be performed by the families of the perpetrator and victim together, while standing on either side of a river. A goat is then sacrificed in the running water to cool the spirit.

The other type of *ngozi* is that of the spirit of an aggrieved mother. According to Gelfand (197:122), the *ngozi* of a beaten or scolded parent brings illness, not death. This *ngozi* can be appeased by paying compensation to the relatives of one's mother. Bourdillon (1987: 234) alleges that the compensation may include the humiliation of the offender who should dress in rags and beg for the grains needed to brew beer for a feast in honor of the aggrieved spirit of the mother. Some Shona ethnical groups call this shaming ritual, *kutanda botso*. Aschwanden asserts that the Karanga do not have the option of *kutanda botso* but may oblige the offender to pay compensation to his mother while still alive, or to her relatives, if the mother is dead. In like manner, an offending husband may be required to live in his deceased wife's hut, while performing household chores therein as a form of punishment.

The other type of *ngozi* involves the spirit of an unpaid worker who would have been aggrieved by the lack of remuneration for his labor, and comes back seeking justice. This type of *ngozi* can be appeased by the payment of compensation, although it is claimed that sometimes it is difficult to locate the relatives of this type of *ngozi*. This challenge comes from the fact that in the past, some of the domestic workers in Zimbabwe were foreigners, whose relatives were not known. In such cases, diviners assisted the victims in tracing and identifying the relatives of the offended spirit.

Crawford (1967: 88) postulates that among the Budya of Mutoko, a murderer could prevent the deceased from becoming *ngozi* by performing some rituals soon after the murder. He claims that one of the ways to prevent the effects of *ngozi* was for the perpetrator to eat the *muputi/mutimwi* (waist medicinal string) of the murdered person. Alternatively, the murderer could eat the blood from the victim's private parts, little fingers or toes, ears, heart, or tongue. This ritual was believed to prevent the murdered person from becoming *ngozi*.

2.3.3 Ancestors

The Shona define ancestors as the deceased spiritual and invisible members of a family, who would have been initiated into ancestorhood and invited back home through several rituals performed by their family members. Mbiti (1990: 81, 82) paradoxically calls them, "the living-dead," who he defines as the departed of up to five generations, who are "in a state of personal immortality, and their process of dying is not yet complete." They are still people and have not yet become things, because they are interested in the affairs of their families, they symbolically share food with family members, are recognized by their names, and they participate in family

activities and rituals, (Mbiti, 1990: 82). They are dead because they died, and were buried, and no longer possess the physical human body. They may reveal their presence and needs through dreams, visions, or diviners, as Anderson (2000: 181) has put it. Although they are in the spiritual form, they continue to be active in family affairs.

Not everyone can become an ancestor after death, for there are qualifications and disqualifications that the deceased should have fulfilled or avoided respectively, during his physical life. One should have been married, and presumably begotten children. Among the Shona, these children would be responsible for performing the *magadziro* (making an ancestor ceremony), a ritual, which incorporates the deceased's spirit back into the family as an ancestor. Even though the spirit of the deceased and perhaps other family ancestors may demand the *magadziro* ritual, they can only demand it from the offspring of the deceased. That is why marriage is crucial among Africans.

In addition to that, one should have lived a long and fruitful life, which does not necessarily refer to the number of years lived, but also to having descendants who would inherit one's name. A long life is a sign of blessedness and fulfillment among the Shona. Mbiti (1990: 83) claims that a spirit remains an ancestor as long as there is a member of the family who remembers it. Once remembrance ceases, the spirit stops to be an ancestor and drifts into the world of nameless spirits. Opoku (1978: 36), with reference to his observation of the Akan of Ghana, states that for the deceased to become an ancestor, he should have lived a fruitful, long, worthy of emulation life, and would have died a good death. According to him, people who die from suicide, accidents, violence, lunacy, dropsy, leprosy, and epilepsy are disqualified from becoming

ancestors. The same qualifications and disqualifications are echoed by Ikenga-Metuh (1987: 147), who also maintains that the deceased should have lived a life of acceptable moral standards. It appears that Africans think that if the spirit of a person who would have died of any of the tabooed deaths is allowed to come back home as an ancestor, he may cause one of the family members to die the same way or by the same disease.

Ancestors do have several responsibilities. Gelfand (1962: 51) says that ancestors protect their family members from harm; hence they merit the title, “guardian spirits.” They can safeguard the well-being of their relatives because they see what the living members of their families cannot. In addition to that, they do have the ability to defend them. Quarcoopome (1987: 139), writing from a West African perspective, asserts that ancestors are “guardians and policemen of public and private morality, and unseen presidents at family meetings,” who are the intermediaries between their living family members and the divinities. In support of that Mbiti (1990: 82) holds that “ancestors are guardians of family affairs,” ethics, traditions, and other activities, and as such, they are the “invisible police officers” of the people. Africans believe that ancestors are very capable of being police officers of morality because they can see what humans cannot see. They do not only apprehend transgressors of societal norms, but they also judge and mete out punishment to them. Parrinder (1970: 59) affirms that ancestors are concerned with everything that affects their families, particularly health and fertility. They also own the land, which they make fecund by providing the rain. Olupona (2000: 167) postulates that ancestors also assist in holding families together.

Ancestors are at the center of African spirituality, and there have been debates as to whether they can or cannot cause sickness and death to one of their own family members. On the one hand, some scholars believe that ancestors can cause serious harm to their family members if aggrieved. According to Olupona (2000: 167), “a certain amount of unpredictability is a characteristic of all ancestors,” for they can be vengeful spirits if offended. Several things can offend the ancestors. Gelfand (1966: 62, 63) asserts that ancestors can be annoyed if one of the family members decides to go away to live in town or elsewhere, far away from the rural home, for one should remain in the village where his umbilical cord is buried. Living away from home may prevent the family member from attending ancestral rituals at home, and this neglect of rituals may cause him to forget his family traditions. In the past, if going to live away from home could not be avoided, ancestors had to be told about it and asked for their protection.

But it should be noted that ancestors do not just punish people randomly. Gelfand (1962: 52) contends that a family that “leads a good clean life, according to the tenets of its faith, the *vadzimu* (ancestors) are unlikely to trouble it.” In support of that, Magesa (1997: 50) insists that ancestors bring misfortunes upon their own families for two reasons. First, the punishment would be good for the order of the universe. Second, the disciplinary measures would be good for the well-being of the people and their communities. For Magesa (1997: 80), the penal measures, though painful, are intended to correct the attitude and behavior of their descendants. He claims that the afflictions from ancestors are the deserved consequences of some family members’ misdemeanors.

Echoing the same sentiments, Kayode (1984: 19) contends that ancestors do not just punish good people, but the neglectful and disobedient. Those who neglect their family and communal responsibilities are likely to face the wrath of the ancestors. He claims that their punitive measures are more severe for the people who violate the prescribed discipline and ignore the duties they do owe to their family members and the community.

According to Mbiti (1990: 83), ancestral anger can be ignited by several offenses such as rendering improper burial to the departed, neglect to offer ancestors food and libations, and failure to observe their instructions. Those who perform their family and communal duties have no reason to fear and resent ancestors. Chavhunduka (1994: 59) mentions incest as one of the causes of ancestral anger. He claims that the aggrieved ancestors may withhold the rains, which may bring about the indiscriminate suffering of both people and animals. In the case of a drought, even innocent people are bound to suffer because of the transgressions of an individual. That is why, in African societies, everyone is supposed to be his brother's or sister's, keeper.

It looks like the majority of scholars concur that ancestors may punish their family members to enforce the moral standards of the African society. However, some scholars strongly disagree that ancestors directly cause sickness, misfortunes, or even death. Such scholars argue that ancestors do not directly cause misfortunes, but merely withdraw their protection, leaving their family members vulnerable to attacks from the evil spirits and witches. According to Gelfand (1962: 124), the Shona do not believe that *mudzimu* (ancestor) can kill or cause the death of a relative. For him, if a death is not from natural causes, it should be attributed to witches and

ngozi, and never to ancestors. In affirmation to that point, Mbiti (1989: 151) maintains that there is very little evidence that ancestors ever cause death because they easily relent if appeased.

It appears that ancestors may not directly cause sickness or death of their relatives, but their withdrawal of protection endangers their family members, who are then exposed to attacks by witches and evil spirits. Therefore, they too may be guilty of complicity for the misfortunes that befall their family members. Although ancestors can be appeased easily, they would have caused pain and suffering in the first place. It should be noted that sickness of any kind weakens the ailing person, and may expose him to more diseases in the future.

2.3.4 Alien Spirits

The Shona believe that some sicknesses are caused by alien spirits (*mashavi*). These are spirits of people who die away from home and are not accorded proper burial rites, and of those who are disqualified from becoming ancestors, which seek recognition among strangers. Gelfand (1959: 121) defines *mashavi* as spirits of foreigners who die and are buried in a strange land, which “wander around the country searching for suitable mediums or hosts to possess.” Daneel (1971: 128) affirms Gelfand’s definition of *mashavi* by referring to them as “spirits that come from afar, from underground, from the deep pool or merely from distant places.” The bottom line is that *mashivi* are spirits of people who are unrelated to the hosts.

Bucher (1980: 89) mentions the controversial phenomenon of animal *mashavi*. It is believed that the spirits of animals such as baboons may possess people and impart on them some of their natural traits. Since *mashavi* are not ancestors, they are not readily accepted by their hosts.

Usually, they impose themselves on the chosen hosts and eventually persuade them to accept and offer them rituals in exchange for certain talents and gifts. Bucher (1980: 89) calls this acceptance of alien spirits “accreditation,” which may take some arm-twisting of the host by the desperate spirit.

There are many types of *mashavi*. Daneel (1971: 129) identifies the *jukwa* alien spirits which have rainmaking capabilities. These are believed to have originated from Matonjeni, which was the shrine of Mwari. According to Chigwedere (1980: 58), the Zungu *shavi* originated from the Portuguese. Gelfand (1959: 121) claims that the Mazungu *shavi* has its origins in the people from Mozambique, who died in Mashonaland. The Zungu *shavi* bestows hunting and healing skills on its host. Madzviti *shavi* is said to have arisen from the Ndebele warriors who died away from home, during their raids. Gelfand (1959: 121–125) lists many other types of *mashavi*, such as Masongono, Bveni, Zvipenzi, Murozvi, and Shangana. Each type of alien spirits conveys particular gifts, such as hunting, farming, healing, divination, or fighting, unto its host. The anti-social alien spirits may pass on undesirable gifts such as stealing, witchcraft, laziness, and many other harmful traits to their hosts.

It is believed that before the alien spirits find a willing host, they are aggrieved because of several reasons. First, they may have perished in distant places and could have been laid to rest there. Second, since they died in faraway places and buried among foreigners, they might not have been accorded proper burial rituals as befitting their own traditions. Third, it takes some doing for such spirits to find a willing host, and that is why they have to pressure the intended host to accept them. As a matter of fact, very few people are ready to pay homage to *mashavi*

unless they are promised some rewarding talents such as healing, hunting, divination, among others. So, to announce their desire to possess an individual, and to enforce their acceptance, alien spirits usually cause sickness to the chosen person. If the chosen person is still a child, as is sometimes the case, her parents may consult a diviner concerning the cause of the sickness. Usually, the parents are told about the *shavi* and the gifts that it intends to offer the host. They are also told about the type of ritual they should perform to accept the spirit. Once accepted, the host's health should be restored. She also is expected to receive the promised gifts soon afterwards.

It is believed that the *shavi* spirit does not cause death, and the illness is expected to go away as soon as the initiation ritual, which is attended by the family members of the hosts, neighbors, and a diviner is performed. Most of the *mashavi* are expected to possess their hosts at the acceptance ritual. Once accredited, the spirit should be appeased regularly. According to Rayner (1962: 101), the spirit has to be appeased by clothes, food, ornaments, and blood, in repayment of the special skills imparted on the medium.

2.4 HUMAN CAUSES

There are basically two causes of sickness and death, which are caused by human beings, either on their own volition or under the influence of some spirits. The two causes are witches and *mhondi* (murderers). Most witches choose to be witches and to engage in witchcraft business. Likewise, most *mhondi* choose to murder people for one reason or another. However, the Shona believe that some of the people who become witches are coerced into the practice by some evil

spirits. The same applies to *mhondi*, some of whom are also believed to operate under the influence of some spiritual forces. Although the Shona understand that these evil spirits may compel good people to harm others, the human perpetrators should be held accountable for the outcome of their actions. For the purpose of this study, this passage will only explore witchcraft.

2.4.1 Witchcraft

The commonest and most feared cause of sickness or death among the Shona, and perhaps among many other African ethnical groups is *huroyi* (witchcraft). According to Magesa (1997: 182), “In the African mentality, everything wrong or bad in society and in the world, and, most particularly, various afflictions, originate in witchcraft.” Technically, a person who practices witchcraft is called a witch if she is a woman, and a wizard if he is a man. However, most Shona people refer to either a man or a woman who practices witchcraft as *muroyi*, which is applicable to both genders. Hence, either a male or female *muroyi* is popularly called a witch.

There are two different, yet related conceptions of a witch among the Shona. First, the word “witch” can refer to any bad, envious, and individualistic person, as Chavhunduka (1994: 86) has noted. Bourdillon (1987: 181, 182) includes, in this category of witchcraft, selfish people and those who break serious taboos, particularly those who commit incest. Incest is considered to be so evil that only extremely evil people practice it. So, anybody has the potential of becoming a witch, if one is to go by Chavhunduka’s opinion. However, this kind of witchcraft seems to derive its meaning from the real witchcraft, which this passage explores.

Second, most Shona conceive of a witch as an extremely evil person, who harms others secretly and mysteriously by the employment of evil powers and harmful concoctions. Shorter (1973: 138) points out that the witches' power is "essentially and implacably evil." The Shona witch is different from the witches found among some ethnical groups in West Africa, where witchcraft is believed to be a vital force or potential that may manifest in the practicing of witchcraft if cultivated, as Magesa (1997: 182) has observed. Similarly, Evans-Pritchard (1976: 1) alleges that among the Azande, witchcraft is seen as a substance in the body, which, due to certain favorable elements may manifest into full-fledged witchcraft. In this case, everyone has the potential of becoming a witch.

Even though scholars may differ in their conceptions of witchcraft, most agree on the common characteristic of a witch. It is believed that both men and women may practice witchcraft, but the majority of witches are women. In support of this general claim, Parrinder (1963: 138, 139, 143) asserts that witches are usually women, although men also engage in the trade. Bourdillon (2000: 176) and several other scholars concur that witches act secretly in the dark, desecrate graves, may kill people, and devour their victims' flesh. Magesa (1997: 185) states that witches commit other heinous crimes such as harming their family members as an initiation ritual into the witchcraft trade, committing incest, and engaging in intercourse with spirits and animals. Bourdillon (1990: 189) refers to these despicable sexual activities as "orgies," which involve witches, spirits, and familiars. Elsewhere, Bourdillon (2000: 176) claims that witches work in cohorts, attend nocturnal gatherings, where they perform contemptible rituals which include, "dancing naked, disturbing graves, eating human flesh," and engaging in other outrageous behaviors. Concerning the eating of the victim's flesh by witches, Parrinder (1963: 147, 149),

writing about other African ethnicities, alleges that witches only eat the flesh symbolically, without harming the body. He claims that they rather eat the victim's soul. However, among the Shona, the grisly devouring of human flesh by witches is believed to be real, not symbolic.

Gelfand (1966: 74, 75) postulates that witches become invisible when on duty, and may use animals such as snakes, hyenas, and owls during their bewitching errands. It is believed that they can manipulate snakes, which they send to bite their victims. They may also ride on hyenas as they travel from one homestead to another. Witches can also change themselves into such animals. Gelfand (1966: 75) argues that while most witches operate at night, there are also some witches that operate during the day. Such daylight witches clandestinely place harmful medicine along the targeted person's path or may poison the food of their victims. Elsewhere, this type of witchcraft would be referred to as sorcery. For the Shona, there is no clear distinction between sorcery and witchcraft, for all employment of evil to harm others is called witchcraft.

There are several methods of witchcraft acquisition among the Shona. Hereditary witches are those who inherit witchcraft from their parents or grandparents. According to Gelfand (1967: 26), such witchcraft is usually passed on to one daughter by her mother. Akrong (2007: 54) alleges that in Ghana, witchcraft can be inherited at birth or from a contaminated mother. Some witchcraft is imparted on the recipient by a bewitching spirit. According to Chavhunduka (1994: 92), the bewitching spirit may be either of a relative or stranger who was a witch. Since such witches practice witchcraft under the possession of the bewitching spirit, Bourdillon (1987: 179) claims that they may not have awareness of their abominable activities. However, it is believed that some of them may have weird dreams, which may alert them as to their possession by the

bewitching spirits. Some may become aware of their activities after being identified by a diviner. Other people may acquire witchcraft through training or receiving instructions from a senior witch, as noted by Rayner (1962: 87). It is also believed that people can purchase witchcraft from seasoned witches. In support of this belief, Haar, ter (2007: 106), writing about Ghanaian witchcraft, says that men can purchase their witchcraft from those who already possess it.

There are many other types of witchcraft in addition to the night witchcraft that has been described above. For instance, there are also agricultural witches who possess *divisi*, which according to Gelfand (1966: 79) is the medicine that is mixed with soil and scattered in the field to enhance one's agricultural produce. Furthermore, some witches use protective medicine called *rukwa*, which is used to safeguard the owner's properties from thieves. *Rukwa* is considered witchcraft because it endangers people who may steal the property. The Shona understand that stealing is evil, but it is a pernicious offense to endanger other people for stealing your property. Rodlach (2006: 89) writes about the love potion as another type of witchcraft, which is believed to be added to the food of men who are suspected of having extra-marital affairs, and is believed to influence the behavior of such men. It prevents such men from falling in love with other women.

There are several reasons that may compel witches to bewitch someone. It is believed that they may do that because of jealous, particularly when their victim is more successful than them, in agriculture, hunting, and other economic enterprises. Witches may bewitch a person who they hate because of reasons sometimes only known to themselves. Bourdillon ((1987: 175) alleges that having some grudge against one of the witches may spring them into action. Moreover, they

may bewitch someone to devour his flesh at their nightly cannibalistic meetings, (Bourdillon, 1990: 189).

People can protect themselves from the effects of witchcraft. One of the preventive measures that the Shona employ is medicinal waist belts (*mazango*). In the past, these *mazango* were tied around the waists of almost every baby since it was believed that babies were extremely vulnerable to attacks by evil spirits and witches. Sometimes, people would use medicinal pegs, which they would drive into the soil around their homesteads to prevent witches and evil spirits from entering. Staying free of grudges may also help since most witchcraft accusations happen where there is social friction. Usually, people accuse their enemies of witchcraft. Bourdillon (1987: 188) suggests resettling far away from the witch, exorcism, and expulsion of the witch as some of the protective measures that can be used by the Shona to prevent attacks.

Even though witches are believed to do their business secretly in the dark, there are ways used to identify them. Bourdillon (1987: 185) claims that one's natural bodily disposition may lead to witchcraft accusations. For instance, a woman of sulky disposition, morose demeanor, and reserved character may be suspected of witchcraft, (Bourdillon, 1987: 185). Sometimes, the family of the victims may consult a diviner about the causes of sickness, and are then told of the involvement of a witch. In the past, most diviners readily named the witch, which became a criminal offense after the enactment of the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899.

Furthermore, some ordinary people claim to see witches in dreams and visions. In Zimbabwe, there is a group of diviners called *tsikamutanda*, who move from village to village for the sake of

identifying witches. The identified witches, who profess the need to get rid of it, are then exorcised of their witchcraft for a fee.

There have been debates as to whether witchcraft as it is understood by the Shona, exists in reality, or as a mere figment of their imagination. Contributors to this controversy interpret the phenomenon from three primary angles. One school of thought argues that witchcraft does not exist in reality. The second school of thought, which is populated by ordinary adherents of African Traditional Religion insists that witchcraft exists in reality, and its existence can only be ignored at one's own peril. The third school of thought belongs to those who are sitting on the fence. These are indifferent. They neither confirm nor deny the existence of witchcraft.

The people who argue for the existence of witchcraft provide evidence for their position. They argue that some people have confessed to being witches without being forced to do so, (Bourdillon, 1990: 209). These people would not confess to being witches if they were not. Crawford (1967: 45–58) explores several confessions by witches concerning their nefarious activities, which they are said to have voluntarily given. He provides the names of the witches and their victims (dead and alive), and the vivid narratives of how they acquired witchcraft. The people and scholars who hold that witchcraft is a reality take such confessions as irrefutable evidence for the existence of witchcraft. Bourdillon (1987: 174) also affirms the evidence from the witch's confessions. Parrinder (1963: 161–165), writing on a different forum, presents confessions by witches in which some claimed to have bewitched even their own children.

Second, some people are believed to have been bewitched. According to Bourdillon (1987: 174), some people are said to have died after receiving threats by a witch. Usually, these threats come after the witch would have been upset because of something. Some people are reported to have issued such threats when one of their family members was sick. In those threats, the suspected witches are dared to reverse the effects of their witchcraft or face retaliation by the one issuing the threats. Other people give such threats to retaliate for an evil done to themselves or one of their family members.

The third piece of evidence for the existence of witchcraft involves patients whose ailments may resist Western medicines. Bourdillon (1987: 174) alleges that sometimes sickness and deaths which Western medicines and medical practitioners cannot cure or explain, respectively, occur. Where there is no clear explanation as to the cause of sickness or death, some Shona people would perceive the involvement of witches. As a matter of fact, some people claim that the Western medical practitioners sometimes instruct them to take their ailing family members to the traditional medical practitioners when they suspect witchcraft as the cause of illness.

The universality of the belief in witchcraft, particularly in Africa has been offered as another vital piece of evidence concerning the reality of witchcraft. It has been argued that all these believers of witchcraft cannot be wrong. Supporters of this argument seem to subscribe to the philosophy that says the majority are likely to be right.

Finally, Chitakure (1917: 131) argues that even though ordinary people cannot identify witches, there are specialists who can do that. The same can be said about Western health systems. There

are causes of diseases that can only be identified by those who are trained to do so using special instruments that are made to detect gems and other causes of illness. There is no reason to disagree with their diagnosis because they possess the knowledge to speak to that competently and authoritatively. In African Traditional Religion, traditional medical practitioners possess the knowledge and authority to identify sicknesses caused by witchcraft. They have the power to see what the ordinary eyes cannot. They are health specialists, and their diagnosis should be believed.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that witchcraft does not exist. They too have their own evidence to support their views. Shorter (1973: 142) postulates that witches' confessions may not be used as evidence for the existence of witchcraft because some people may confess just to attain power. Most Africans are afraid of witches, and they are likely to fear people who claim to be witches. The people confessing to be witches might not be witches at all.

In addition to that, Shorter (1973: 140) contends that witchcraft accusations may be a psychological outlet for repressed "frustration and hostility." Most of the time, people suspect their enemies of witchcraft, not friends. For him, there is a pattern of tension and conflict among the so-called victims and perpetrators of witchcraft. Therefore, what people claim to be witchcraft is just a way of venting their own frustrations.

Furthermore, since witchcraft can be practiced by people without their knowledge, there is very little defense if accused. If the accused denies being a witch, the accusers are likely to point out that she practices witchcraft under the possession of a spirit, which prevents her from knowing

her wicked activities. In support of that argument, Evans-Pritchard (1976: 59) asserts that to deny that one is a witch is against the custom because it is possible to be a witch without knowing it. This custom creates doubts in the accused because one can never be convinced of being guilty of some crime which one has no awareness of committing.

It has also been argued that since the majority of witches are women, some accusations may be a result of patriarchal marginalization of women, (Shorter, 1973: 140). According to Akrong (2007: 63–64), the women accused of witchcraft may be marginalized, ostracized, humiliated, tortured, or even killed. Once they are accused of witchcraft, they have no one to empathize with them, when their human rights are trashed. People would feel that the accused women deserve punishment. So, it seems that these accusations are biased against women because they do not have the same power as men have.

Although doubts have been cast on the existence of witchcraft, many Africans still believe in its existence. Bourdillon (1990: 188) asserts that, while the existence of witchcraft cannot be proved, its existence cannot be disapproved as well. Perhaps, the biggest question is not about its existence or non-existence, but about the belief in its existence. Africans believe that witchcraft is the biggest cause of sickness, misfortunes, and death.

2.5 HEALING

Whenever one becomes sick, the Shona provide the sick person with medicinal herbs that are intended to cure him of his ailments. Almost everyone knows some of the common healing herbs

that can be used. Most common illnesses are cured this way. However, when some sickness lingers on, or is so severe, the Shona usually consult a traditional healer for more effective medicines, and also to learn the cause of the sickness. If the sickness ends with death, the diviner is consulted concerning the cause of such an eventuality. The consultation of a diviner to inquire about the cause of death is called *gata*, and is sometimes required before the performance of certain post-burial rituals, such as *magadziro* (Cleansing Ceremony), which will be dealt with in chapter 3.

Traditional healers are known by many different names, such as traditional medical practitioners, mediums, and derogatorily as “witch-doctors.” The Shona call them *n’anga* or *chiremba*. *N’anga* can be classified into two major categories. Herbalists are those traditional healers who specialize in therapeutic herbs. Some would have acquired such knowledge from other herbalists. Others attain their herbal skills through the inspiration of the spirits that possess them. There are also traditional healers, who solely use spirits in their healing activities, and may have the ability to divine the cause of sickness or death. Their gifts are imparted onto them either by the ancestral or stranger spirits called *mashavi*.

Gelfand (1962: 88–117) explores the different types of alien spirits and the skills that they give to their hosts. The diviners can consult their *hakata* (bones), concerning the causes of sickness or death. Gelfand (1962: 88–117) explains how these *hakata* are made and used to determine the cause of sickness or death. Some traditional healers can do both divination and healing. Bucher (1980: 117) describes divination as a process of putting questions to the *hakata* (dice) before they are thrown into the air, and falling to the ground. Their significance can then be read from

the position in which they land on the ground. There is no skill needed in throwing the *hakata* into the air, but in interpreting the meaning of their position as they settle on the ground.

For one to become a *n'anga*, one should be called by the spirit which wants to use him. Bucher (1980: 114) holds that the spirit may call the host in dreams in which he sees the spirit instructing him to perform certain tasks. In other cases, the chosen host becomes seriously sick. If the targeted host is a married woman, she may become temporarily barren. The family members of the sick person or barren woman may consult a diviner who is likely to alert them of the demands of the spirit. The family may consult more than one *n'anga*, until they are satisfied of the verdict. The healer is likely to tell them what the spirit will offer in exchange for its acceptance. They then perform a ritual in honor of the “invading spirit.” If the spirit is a healer, the host eventually becomes a healer.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the causes of sickness and death among the Shona people. The identified causes were explored under three major categories: Godly, spiritual, and human causes of sickness and death. It should be noted that when a Shona person is sick, the aim of his family is to assist him to recuperate naturally. This natural healing may be accompanied by the use of common herbs. If the sick person does not heal, or if he becomes seriously ill, his relatives are likely to consult a diviner to find out the cause of the ailment. The Shona may also seek the help of the traditional healer to cure the sick person. The Shona believe that most ailments can be cured using common herbs. However, at times, the sick person does not

recuperate; he dies. If the sickness leads to the ailing person's demise, many rituals are performed to initiate the spirit of the deceased into the realm of ancestors, and the literature that deals with such rituals is reviewed in chapter 3.

The review of the scholars in this chapter shows that there is an academic gap in the knowledge of the issues at stake. First of all, all these scholars did not do their research among the Karanga of Nyajena. Although Bourdillon, explores causes of sickness in his book, he does not classify the causes for easy understanding. Crawford deals with witchcraft in detail, but he did his study among the Karanga of Mwenezi, who have been influenced by their acculturation with the Shangani and Venda people. Hence, some of his findings have no bearing on the Karanga of Nyajena. Shorter approaches witchcraft from a sociological point of view, with the aim of proving its reality of non-existence. Gelfand does a good job with alien spirits, but most of his research was not done among the Karanga of Nyajena. The research that was focused on the Karanga of Nyajena was mostly carried out near Muchibwa Hospital, which was likely to have been influenced by Western medical views. Bucher discusses alien spirits in passing. Hence there is a need for a research focused on the Karanga of Nyajena.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: SHONA DEATH RITUALS

3. 1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided the basis for chapter 3 by reviewing the literature that deals with the causes of sickness and death among the Shona people in particular, and other African peoples in general. Chapter 3 builds on the literature review that began in chapter 2 by navigating the death rituals as they are performed, not only by the Karanga of Nyajena, but also by other African peoples. Since the Karanga are an ethnic group of the Shona people, most of the rituals that are explored here are shared by most Shona ethnic groups. As has been alluded to earlier, the names Karanga and Shona will be used interchangeably. Furthermore, the literature that deals with other African ethnicities will also be reviewed for the purpose of comparison. For the sake of clarity, chapter 3 divides Shona death rituals into three sections. Section one deals with pre-burial rituals. Section two explores the rituals associated with death itself (burial rituals), right from the time a person ceases to breathe to the time when the deceased is finally laid to rest. The third section looks at the post-burial rituals.

It is an incontestable fact that human beings are mortal. They are born today, live their lives, and die. While human beings can stop certain things from happening to them and their beloved ones, death is inevitable, and at times, untimely. The inevitability and untimeliness of death do not

make it desirable or acceptable, for many people are afraid of it, and would attempt to evade it, if given that option. Death marks the end to human physical lives, and the beginning of another mysterious life, whose existence almost every religious tradition promises and assures its adherents. Consequently, “funeral ceremonies are the final and most dramatic” end to physical existence as Goody (1962: 28) has asserted. In support of that, Thomas (2005: 151) postulates that “death is the most sacred of all the rites of passage because it serves as the gateway to the afterlife, where one finally achieves the status of ancestor.” Moved by the same spirit, Mwandayi (2011: 56) defines death as “the separation of the body and soul in which the material body takes a new state of decomposition while the soul due to its immortality continues to survive as a spiritual entity.”

Even though the Karanga people believe that the human soul continues to live in a spiritual form after death, it is difficult to embrace the thought of dying because of the mysteries surrounding it, and the lack of indubitable knowledge of what happens after it. Of course, there could be another life as numerous religious traditions profess, but no one knows exactly if the quality of life in the afterlife would be the same as this physical life. Furthermore, death is one of the “most disrupting phenomenon of all,” as Mbiti (1989: 145) has rightly observed. It disrupts the orderly flow of life. It sometimes whisks away loved ones without any warning. In affirmation of that, Fisher (1998: 95) contends that the disruption brought about by death makes it an evil that interrupts the harmony of the family life. Gundani (1998: 198) echoes the same sentiments that death frightens both the family and the community, and it “shatters relationships that keep the family or clan going and stable.” When a loved one is taken away by death, the surviving family

members and the community grieve, and are forced to learn to live without the deceased member of the family. Many things are bound to change because of the occurrence of death.

Imasogie (1985: 62) believes that the lack of sufficient knowledge of what happens at the moment of death and the nature of the life after death makes it “a very solemn event fraught with danger for both the deceased and the living: hence, precaution must be taken to ensure that everything is done properly” regarding the rituals to be performed for both the dead person and the remaining family members. Funeral rituals should be performed meticulously lest the spirit of the deceased or the ancestors are displeased. The displeasure of the spirits of the dead matters to most Africans because it sometimes produces dire consequences for the culprits and their families.

In addition to that, this scrupulous performance of death rituals is intended to assist the spirit of the deceased in crossing over into ancestorhood, for “Death is not the end of life, but a transformation of it. It is a profound crossing over of the soul from this world into the next,” as Doumbia, Adama and Naomi (2004: 149) have succinctly put it. In support of that, Wilson (1957: 18) likens death to a journey to the ancestor world. Wilson (1957: 18) writes, “A man, when he dies, is believed to join his ancestors. Until the end of the funeral rites, they say, he is on the way and if the ritual is not properly performed, he does not reach them . . .” Now, if he does not reach the ancestors, there are repercussions—his spirit may come back to torment his family members until it is appeased.

Wilson (1957: 9) has defined a ritual as “primarily religious action, that is, action directed to securing the blessing of some mystical powers.” It may also be performed to avert some punishment that is likely to happen as a result of some misgivings by the adherents of a given faith. For Gennep (1960: 146), funeral rites are accorded the greatest importance, and are most immensely intricate. Shoko (2007: 85) echoes the same sentiments when he postulates that outstanding honor should be accorded to the corpse, “to ensure the protection of the well-being of the people.” Shoko (2007: 86), also says that burial rituals are compulsory, and should be “performed appropriately and efficiently,” to avoid frustrating the deceased.

3.2 PRE-BURIAL RITUALS

Pre-burial rituals refer to the rites that are performed from the time one is grievously or terminally ill until the deceased’s body finally leaves home for burial. Most of the rituals described here are performed for people who die or are buried at home. It should be noted that due to increasing urbanization in Zimbabwe, people who die at hospitals and in cities may not be awarded most of the death rituals described in this chapter. Since some of the bodies of people who die in towns are taken to funeral parlors, the undertakers who work there may use modern ways to deal with some of the rituals described in this chapter.

3.2.1 The Waiting

The Shona, like other people, do not just allow a sick person to die without trying all that they can to restore his health. But they sometimes come to a point where they see the final demise of the sick person as inescapable. At this juncture, most people perform the rituals associated with

the waiting for death. Relatives of the sick person are expected to visit the sick person and spend a little time with him. The relatives who live far away from where the sick person is housed should try to visit the sick person before he dies. Since most people living in the same village are related in one way or the other, almost every adult in the village is expected to visit the sick person even if he is just indisposed. However, it is only close relatives that are expected to visit the sick person if he is hospitalized far away from the rural village.

During this time, the ritual of *kusengudza* (removing from home) may be performed. This ritual entails the removal of the unwell person from his home and relocates him to some secret place, which could be the home of a relative or a diviner or just a temporary shelter built outside the normal home. Bourdillon (1987: 199) enumerates about three possible reasons for the performance of *kusengudza* ritual. First, it is an attempt to remove the sick person from the witches that may be responsible for his sickness. The rationale for relocating the sick person is to take him to a place far beyond the reach of the suspected witches. Even though the activities of witches cannot be escaped by running away, it seems that the effectiveness of their nefarious activities is affected by distance. Longer distances seem to make their witchcraft less harmful. Second, it is also an attempt to take the sick person to a place far away from the evil spirits that may be responsible for his sickness. This going away is likely to confuse the spirits. Third, sometimes the sick person is relocated to a home or a healing place of a traditional medical practitioner to receive treatment. The relocation to the home of a medical practitioner is intended to help the sick person to have easy access to the healer and medication. Muchemwa (2002: 32) asserts that this removal of the sick person from home is intended to protect the rest of the family from the danger of death. Usually, *kusengudza* is done for patients who have

difficulties walking or are completely bedridden. If the health of the patient continues to deteriorate, his relatives should bring him back to his home, lest he dies at another person's home. However, in the past, the sick person was allowed to die in a *kusengudza* makeshift hut constructed outside the main home of the dying person.

Gelfand (1959: 203) states that among the Shona of Chinamora, the *kusengudza* ritual was a must if the critically sick person were a chief. An ailing chief would be removed from home, and was taken to a diviner where he would spend his last days. This temporary abode, and the news of the chief's illness were kept a secret to the public. Only the chief's nephews and grandchildren would know about this secret place. This relocation was done to keep the death of the chief secret for almost a month after it had happened. Bullock (1913: 46), writing about the Makorekore and Watonga, claims that the secrecy surrounding the chief's illness and relocation to a diviner's place were intended to prevent members of rival houses from knowing about his subsequent death and clandestine burial, lest they steal a piece of his flesh to create an avenging spirit that would torment his own nuclear family.

During the period of waiting for the impending demise of the sick person, the ritual of confession or reconciliation may be performed. According to Bourdillon (1987: 199), the sick person is expected to reveal to the person of his choice the whereabouts of any hidden treasures, alert them about "any outstanding debts, and confess any outstanding offenses" against any member of the community. This ritual may also be an opportunity for the dying person to offer forgiveness to others if need be. It is also at this time that some dying people may reveal the identities of some secret children who they would have sired outside their formal marriages. Some death-bound

persons may confess their grudge against a member of the family or community, after which reconciliation may be welcome.

Mbiti (1989: 145), writing about the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, says that the seriously ill person should never be left alone. There always should be someone to keep watch on the ailing person. If the ill person is a man, his brother or oldest son should be the watchman. Mbiti (1989: 146) claims that “the presence of the eldest son at the deathbed” of his father signifies two things. First, it assures the dying person of the perpetuity of his name through his sons. Second, since remembrance is crucial for the deceased’s becoming an ancestor, the presence of the oldest son is a promise that the dying man would be remembered. This remembrance is believed to guarantee him of ancestorhood after his death.

Furthermore, this watching of the sick person is crucial because there are rituals that should be performed as soon as the sick person breathes his last, and these can only be performed if someone is present during the time of death. Bullock (1927: 263) thinks that this final accompaniment could have been prompted by the fact that among some Shona ethnicities, an ill person was not allowed to die before sunset. It was believed that the ancestors, who were supposed to receive the dead person were most active after sunset. During the dying process, the dying person would see the spirits of his ancestors, who were believed to hold him by the hand, and lead him into the ancestral world. Consequently, the duty of the watchman was to distract the ailing person from dying before sunset. Although Bullock’s observation seems much plausible, he does not explain the methods that were used by such watchmen to keep death at bay until the acceptable time to die arrived. Kuper, Hughes, and Velsen (1954: 101) reporting their study of

the Ndebele people, argue that while death could not be delayed, it could be hastened by slaughtering and sacrificing an ancestral beast. This ritual was intended to prevent the sick person from dying during midday. Hence, if there was a reason to suspect that the person would die during midday, the ancestors had to be persuaded to fast-track it so that it happened before midday. It is believed that the ancestors are not active during this time, and if the deceased is not warmly received, his spirit could be offended.

3.2.2 Preparatory Rites

As soon as the dying person breathes his last, the person keeping watch should immediately bend the arms and legs of the corpse as Bullock (1927: 263) has noted. Aschwanden (1987: 230) claims that the folding of some body parts is intended to prevent the spirit of the deceased from fighting since only upright men can fight. In the past, some Shona ethnic groups had some ways, which they used to certify that death had indeed occurred. Bullock (1913: 42) asserts that some cold water would be sprinkled on the dead person to find out if he would not react. Where cold water was not readily available, they would use some incense called *mbanda*, that they would burn to produce smoke that would choke and jolt the dying person if he were still alive. If the water or *mbanda* smoke failed to jolt the dying person, then they would declare him dead. This verification was very important because burying an unconscious person would anger his spirit and the ancestors of the family. Aggrieved ancestors would punish the members of the family.

However, Kuper, Hughes, and Velsen (1954: 101) have a different explanation of the same phenomenon. They claim that the purpose of sprinkling the dead person with water and forcing

him to “inhale the pungent smoke made by burning certain herbs,” was an attempt to resuscitate him, not necessarily to verify his final demise.

According to Chitakure (2017: 61), in the past, the folding of legs was most beneficial to the gravediggers because the length of the grave was determined by the length of the corpse. If the legs and arms were not folded before the body became rigid, the tendons had to be cut to allow the folding. Bullock (1913: 43) reports that the body was laid on its side, and the arms and legs were bent upwards. It is very interesting to note that the folded corpse would resemble an unborn child when in its mother’s womb. This resemblance seems to compare the preparation of the body for burial to another stay in Mother Earth’s womb. In this case, the tomb would be the new womb from which the spirit of the dead would be reborn as an ancestor. Nowadays, most people only fold the arms of the corpse and not the legs because it has become almost standard to bury people in coffins, which are usually of standard length. In bygone times, the folded legs would also determine the length of the bier (*bwanyanza*) that would be used to carry the body to its final resting place. A similar *bwanyanza*, but not necessarily the same, would have been used to carry the same person during the *kusengudza* ceremony. Chitakure (2017: 61) observes that the eyes and mouth are also closed before the body becomes rigid. This ritual is performed to make the dead person resemble a sleeping person. Also, the eyes and mouth are closed to prevent the corpse from scaring mourners.

Bourdillon (1987: 199) states that among most Shona ethnic groups, the body is washed and wrapped in a white cloth or a blanket, or just clothed in new clothes, and laid on a reed mat. It seems that wrapping in white cloth is ubiquitous in Africa. Goody (1962: 69) reports it

happening among West African ethnic groups, particularly the LoDagaa. He writes: “When the old women have anointed the body, they take a length of white cloth and wind it around the waist of the dead man.” Among the LoGagaa, this white cloth would have been purchased using the money obtained as death gifts from previous deaths. While the wrapping of the body with a white cloth is a common phenomenon in Africa, its significance has rarely been explored.

Among the Shona, the official ancestral colors are black and white sewn together, and it might be that the white color is very significant. However, Aschwanden (1987: 232) claims that among the Karanga of Ndanga, Bikita, a black cloth, not white, is used to wrap the corpse. Taboos concerning the color of the cloth exist. Muchemwa (2002: 33) maintains that no red linen should ever be used to wrap the corpse because of two reasons. First, red symbolizes blood and the destruction of life. Second, the Shona believe that red attracts lightning, which can be a natural or human cause of death.

Most Shona groups wash the body of the deceased. Chitakure (1917: 61) holds that this ritual bath does not need to be a full wet bath, but just symbolic. Hence, some people may use a wet towel to target organs of the body that are usually affected by sweat. These may include, but not limited to, armpits, between the legs, private body parts, eyes, and behind the ears. Among other African ethnicities, herbs may be mixed with the bathing water as Doumbia (2004: 150) has observed among West Africans. Muchemwa (2002: 32–33) contends that the symbolic bathing of the corpse serves the purpose of making the deceased’s spirit clean and acceptable to the ancestors. In addition to that, Muchemwa (2002: 32–33) claims that the washing of the corpse resembles human social lives, for people do not receive visitors or “attend a social gathering”

while not clean. Since death is like a journey to a new place, one must be presentable to his hosts.

Usually, the closest family members such as sons and brothers (for a man), and sisters (for a woman), perform this ritual. According to Goody (1962: 56), among the LoDagaa of West Africa, it is usually women advanced in age or who have reached menopause who shoulder this responsibility. Childbearing women are not allowed to perform this ritual, to protect them from the many physical and spiritual risks, which are associated with death. These risks include sickness, death, and bad luck. According to Muchemwa (2002: 33), the corpse should be washed starting with the head, which he equates to how children are normally born with the head coming out first.

3.2.3 Wailing

The wailing starts as soon as the women of the family are notified of the death. If the dying person is being watched by a woman, she may make others aware of the death of the sick person by bursting into wailing, which unlike among the Nyakyusa of Tanzania, will continue intermittently until after the burial, (Wilson, 1957: 30). Rayner (1962: 65) gives three motives for the wailing. First, the wailing might be genuine and out of the sorrow of losing a family member. Second, it may be a result of trying to satisfy the custom since women are expected to weep when someone dies. Third, it may as well be induced by the fear of being suspected of welcoming death. This suspicion may lead to the dreaded accusation of witchcraft.

Writing about the Nuer people, Evans-Pritchard (1956: 114) reports that although women are expected to wail, it should be for a short time to inform neighbors about the death or burial of the deceased. Once the neighbors have been made aware of the occurrence of death, women are expected to stop crying. Among these people, it seems that the wailing is mainly a communication method to notify neighbors of the occurrence of death.

3.2.4 Informing the Family, and the Death Token

The notification of the family and the villagers begins soon after the death of the ill person. The person or people who are present when the dying person breathes his last have the responsibility to notify others of the occurrence of death. If women are present among the watchers, their wailing is a signal that the sick person would have passed on as Evans-Pritchard, (1956: 114) has observed among the Nuer. Those who hear the weeping, immediately rush to where the wailing is coming from to offer their condolences. Among some Shona ethnicities, a ritual drum was used to notify the villagers of the death of the sick person. Relatives who live far away from the home of the deceased were notified by word of mouth.

Goody (1962: 51), in his exploration of death rituals among some ethnicities of West Africa, gives a tripartite method of the announcement of death. The immediate wailing of women that follows the death of a person is intended to notify the people living in the surrounding areas of the occurrence of death. At this point, those who respond to the wailing only know a little about the death in question. The wailing would be followed by the playing of the xylophone using a particular tune that identifies the dead person with a particular gender, for there are distinct tunes for men and women. Finally, messengers would be sent to those relatives who live in distant

places, and they would announce the name of the deceased. So, the villagers are alerted of the occurrence of a death, then the xylophones identify the sex of the dead person, and finally, the messengers give the name of the deceased person. Of course, in most cases, the neighbors already have their suspicions of the identity of the deceased person if he has been unwell for a long period.

According to Gelfand (1959: 184), some relatives should receive formal information about the passing on of their relative. For instance, in the past, some Shona groups were supposed to inform the father-in-law of the death of his son-in-law with a gift of a hoe if he (father-in-law) were not present at the time of death. It was a common practice that close relatives would be summoned if someone were dying. If a hoe were not given, any other relevant token of informing him would be acceptable. If he were not formally notified, he was likely to refuse to attend the funeral to register his disappointment. Also, the *sahwira* (official family friend) was supposed to be among the first to be apprised of the occurrence of death since he would be one of the sacred practitioners during the burial of the deceased. His duties would include making light of the death by telling jokes about the dead person and the living family members, and also receiving his body, and laying it to rest in the grave. Bourdillon (1987: 201) claims that among some Shona ethnicities, the *sahwira*'s antics are therapeutic, for they relieve the people of their grief. In fact, the *sahwira* was supposed to be present during the death of his friend, but if unavailable, he had to be notified as soon as possible.

Nowadays, there are additional means of communicating the occurrence of death. Radios, emails, and cellphones may be used to convey the message of someone's demise to the relatives.

However, the use of these other alternative methods of communication does not override the use of traditional methods. Once they hear the word, all the family members and neighbors begin to gather at the home of the deceased. Everyone who is able is expected to attend the funeral because failure to do so might be construed by the spirit of the deceased as a sign of disrespect. Most close relatives try to arrive at a funeral before the burial of the deceased, and if they are late, the burial may be delayed enabling their late attendance.

Those who gather for the funeral may pay the death token (*chema*) to the widow of the deceased. Rayner (1962: 65) asserts that it is given as a mark of respect to the deceased. Gelfand (1959: 185) refers to *chema* as a “farewell present.” There is no stipulation as to the amount to be given, and there is no single method of paying the *chema*. Rayner (1962: 65) says that the monetary gifts are placed in a bowl that is situated close to the head of the corpse. Bourdillon (1987: 200) writes that the *chema* was just a small coin that would be offered to the dead, and was usually accompanied by a few words by the giver. Muchemwa (2002: 35) contends that in bygone times, *chema* could be paid using goats, bracelets, fowls, and other items of value. Some givers introduce themselves to the departed as they present their gift to the deceased. Others report that there is usually a family member who is appointed to collect the fee. Among the LoDagaa (1962: 69), if not all *chema* is used at the funeral of a person, the remainder should be kept, and should be used at the subsequent funerals in the same family. It should not be spent on other needs except funerals, lest the ancestral spirits are upset.

3. 3. BURIAL RITUALS

These rituals are a continuation of the pre-burial rituals. They start with the carrying of the corpse from the house to the graveyard where the body would be buried, and they end soon after the burial when people go back to their homes or the home of the deceased. However, it is somehow misleading to think of burial rituals as clearly distinct from pre-burial rituals because some of them concurrently run as shall be discussed in this section. This division is principally for academic and clarity purposes, and might not be very practical.

3.3.1 Marking and Digging the Grave

Among most Shona groups, the grave is dug on the day of the burial starting early in the morning until it is finished. Hence, the marking and digging of the grave may be classified under pre-burial rituals. It has been placed under burial rituals because it is the preparation of the final resting place for the dead person, and is more intimately connected to burial itself than to the preceding rituals. The digging of the grave is initiated by the ritual of *ruhau*, which means the symbolic marking of the grave. Mwandayi (2011: 202–203) says that this ritual is supposed to be performed by a close relative who is chosen by the family of the deceased because the grave would be the house of the deceased, and no one is given a house by a stranger. *Ruhau* is almost similar to the ritual that is performed when a Shona man wants to build a house. Usually, his father or guardian is supposed to drive a peg in the soil on the spot the house would be built as a sign that he has given him permission to construct the house, and also to invite the ancestor to bless the place.

The methods of performing *ruhau* are almost similar among many African ethnicities. After the family elders have chosen the place where the grave will be dug, the first mark of the grave is made by the chosen family member using a hoe or pick. Normally, the elected person could be the son, father, or brother of the deceased person. A few words of prayer or of presenting the chosen place for the grave may be uttered just before, or as the sacred digger strikes the earth with the hoe. One may say, “this is the place that we have chosen for your home.”

Even though the standard depth of a grave is about six feet, most Shona people use their eyes rather than a tape measure to determine its depth. According to Evans-Pritchard (1956: 145), the grave is supposed to be deep enough to prevent hyenas and other animals from snatching away the body. It seems that many African groups follow this rule. If the corpse is defiled in any manner, or eaten by wild animals, the spirit of the dead would come back to haunt the family.

If the departed is a woman, it is one of her own relatives who should mark the grave. Her husband or children are not qualified to mark the grave since she is not related to them through totem. Chitakure (2017: 106) contends that “If the grave is not marked by the authorized relative of the deceased, her spirit may become a *ngozi* (avenging spirit), and would come back to haunt her husband’s family including her own children.” Chitakure further alleges that the ritual of *ruhau* is sometimes abused by greedy parents who refuse to mark the grave until they are offered all the outstanding bridewealth for their deceased daughter. The ritual of *ruhau* for a married woman complicates the situation if no sufficient bridewealth was paid for her because a married woman is supposed to be buried at her husband’s home if she has born children, (Wilson, 1957: 13). So, if her family is aggrieved because of one thing or another, the family members may

refuse to perform the ritual of *ruhau*, until the amount of money or number of beasts that they demand is paid. Some may delay the burial as long as they can or until their demands are met. This tactical delay would be challenging to enforce if the burial were being done in their own home because the son-in-law and his family could easily leave before the burial.

Once the ritual of *ruhau* has been performed, other diggers may begin the digging. Ordinarily, most men who are not closely related to the deceased should be at the grave site to assist with the digging, but it is the young adults who perform the task. The male elders who are present during the digging may give directions as to how the grave should be dug. Some Shona groups may offer beer to the gravediggers to cool their thirst since their job is very demanding. At this point, women are at home performing other rituals such as wailing, receiving guests, singing, cooking, and dancing. According to Gelfand (1959: 185), in the past, if the men finished digging the grave earlier than the burial time, it was supposed to be guarded by at least two men, while the rest could go back home where other people were gathered.

3.3.2 Transporting the Corpse to the Grave

When the time for burial arrives, the body is placed on a bier (*bwanyanza*), which is made from two poles and tree bark, a job which Bourdillon (1987: 201–203) apportions to the sons-in-law. The bark and the poles would be broken and placed in the grave during burial. Nowadays, most people are buried in coffins, and again, it is the sons-in-law's responsibility to carry it to the grave. Among some Shona ethnicities, the corpse should exit the house through a hole that is made at the back of the house for the reason of confusing the spirit of the dead if it wanted to come back before the appropriate time and rituals. This arrangement seems to suggest that the

spirit of the dead lacks conventional wisdom of looking for the entrance. Brendan (1930: 57, 60) has reported the same practice of carrying the corpse by some “other way than the ordinary door” as a common practice among Asian cultures, whose “main object may be to prevent the dead from finding his way back.” For Aschwanden (1987: 254), this exiting the hut through an opening at the back is intended to prevent those carrying the bier from being stricken by death as they exit, for it is believed that as the body is being carried out through the door, death might enter through the same door.

The body may be carried around the homestead, and the *varoora* (daughters-in-law) may purify the hut in which the corpse was. Mwandayi (2011: 212) offers two reasons for taking the corpse around the hut. First, it enables the deceased to bid farewell to his habitation. Second, it is done to confuse the spirit if it wanted to come back to haunt its family members. Gelfand (1959: 186) reports of some Shona groups that offer a goat (*nhungamiri*) to the spirit of the dead and other ancestors. This goat is supposed to lead the procession to the grave, where it would be slaughtered later.

As soon as the body exits the house, a procession is formed, and the bier is carried with the head of the deceased facing the grave. In the past, young children were not allowed to take part in the funeral procession, lest the corpse would make them blind, (Bourdillon, 1987: 202). It looks like this taboo was intended to cushion the children from witnessing the fragility and limitedness of human life. Doumbia Adama and Naomi (2004: 152) assert that among some West African ethnicities, women and children should avoid the route the funeral procession would have taken

to the grave, for a couple of weeks after burial. Anyone who violates this taboo may become ill. However, it might be difficult to tell if the violators became actually ill or blind.

As the funeral procession marches to the grave, the bier should be placed on the ground for ritual resting for a couple of times. There are no stipulations concerning the number of rests or the distance between rests, but Bourdillon (1987: 202) suggests two or three times. He claims that resting and turning of the corpse is performed for two reasons. One of the reasons is to confuse the spirit of the dead so that it does not find its way back into the home if it ever wanted to return prematurely. The spirit's coming back into the home should wait until the required rituals that guarantee its safe return are carried out. The other reason is that it gives the participants some time to observe some silence, while clapping and ululating, in honor of the deceased. However, as shall be noted in chapter 4, nowadays, most corpses are transported to the grave by vehicles, and the resting ritual is not performed until at the actual grave.

Bullock (1913: 44) asserts that the length of the distance between resting spots does not matter, but the resting itself. Once the ritual leader is satisfied with the distance traveled, he may instruct the people carrying the bier to rest the corpse. Gelfand (1959: 186) suggests that about every 20 yards, the bier should be placed to the ground, and the position of the body is then changed, with feet pointing to where the head was. However, the bier carriers should remember to have the head of the corpse face the grave after the last stop. Mwandayi (2011: 212) holds that since the Shona understand death as a journey, there is a need for the spirit of the deceased to rest just like other sojourners do.

After the final stop, the bier or coffin may be carried straight to the grave where it is placed near the grave. It should be noted that there are taboos concerning burial times. Burial should be either in the morning or afternoon. Mwandayi (2011: 210) quoting Muchemwa, stipulates the acceptable burial times as between 4:00 am and 12:00 noon, or 2:30 pm and 10:00 pm. He asserts that the principal reason for observing these times is to honor the ancestral working and resting schedule, who are supposed to receive the spirit of the dead after the burial. In other words, the spirit of the deceased should arrive in the ancestral world during their working hours to facilitate its warm reception. This specification of burial times seems to be post-colonial since there were no watches before the arrival of the colonists in Zimbabwe or many other African states. During that era, time was reckoned by just looking at the position of the sun, moon, or some stars. So, the forbidden burial time would be referred to as, “midday,” rather than some specific times. This practice of resting the corpse is tied to the idea that the spirit of the dead does not leave his body until the body is buried. Even after that brief visit to the world of ancestors, the spirit is believed to come back to the grave from where it would be invited to come back home later as an ancestor.

3.3.4 Laying the Body in the Grave

When everything is ready, and perhaps after a few speeches, the body is placed in the grave. In some places, the *sahwira* will be among the people who perform this job. In other places, the sons-in-law are expected to lay the body into the grave. Gelfand (1966: 81) states that the body is laid on the reed mat (*rupasa*), and a wooden pillow (*mutago*) is placed under its head. He further alleges that in the past, no singing was allowed during this most solemn time.

Doumbia (2004: 151) contends that some African ethnicities place some food supplies, money, drinks, and other gifts into the grave for the spirit of the deceased and other ancestors who would welcome him into their realm. Bullock (1927: 268–269) notes that if the deceased is a woman, pots, water-pitchers, and spoons, are placed in the grave, but only a drinking cup for a man. For Bourdillon (1987: 203), among most Shona groups, these utensils are placed onto the grave not inside and are intended for the use of the spirit in its new life. These utensils are supposed to be cracked if the person being buried was good, but should not be cracked if he was of ill-repute. The cracking of utensils might have indicated the length of the stay the spirit would have to endure before being allowed to come back home as an ancestor. It seems the spirit of a good person was offered cracked utensils so that it would aspire to come back home where the utensils are uncracked. The spirit of a bad person was offered uncracked utensil for it to go for good. However, bullock (1913: 43) argues that the utensils are cracked to signify that, while the utensils were needed in the past, they would not be needed in the future. Among other African groups, Mbiti (1991:118) has observed spears, bows and arrows, stools, snuff, and other things being put into the grave if the deceased is a man. He claims that the weapons are intended for the dead man's use in the ancestral world.

The direction to which the body should face is dictated by the tradition of the person being buried. This direction could be East, West, South, or North. Bullock (1927: 268) suggests that the body should face the direction from which the ancestors of the deceased would have come. This suggestion is based on the theory that the Shona are not the indigenous inhabitants of Zimbabwe—they came from the North. Also, the Shona continued to migrate, and the direction referred to here, maybe that of the founder of their clan.

Mbiti (1989:146) reports that the Ndebele bury their corpses facing the South because that is the direction from which they came. Mbiti (1989:146) further alleges that among the Ndebele, the side on which the corpse lies, depends on the gender of the deceased—men lie on their right side and women on their left. In support of that, Bourdillon (1987: 203) asserts that among the Shona, the normal burying side for men is the right, to prevent the deceased from killing people using his right hand assuming that the dead person is right-handed. Muchemwa (2002: 34) alleges that if the corpse of a man is laid in the grave on its left side, the spirit will come back to strike “with inexorable force and it will bring trouble after trouble.” While several scholars concur concerning the side on which male and female corpses should lie in the grave, Aschwanden (1987: 255) begs to differ by stating that among the Karanga of Ndanga, Bikita, a woman should be buried on her right and a man on his left. The rationale behind this being that, during human conjugal intimacy, men favor to lie on the left-hand side, and women on the right-hand side.

Just before the grave is covered with soil, each relative present may throw a handful of soil into the grave. Some elders may perform the ritual for family members who are not present during the burial. Gelfand (1966: 81) believes that the objective of throwing these handfuls of soil into the grave is “to prevent *manenji* (an accident or misfortune) happening to any relative who is far away and cannot attend.” In agreement with that, Bourdillon (1987: 203) contends that the rationale behind this ritual is to cast away evils and misfortunes that may attack the family, seemingly both present and absent. Once all who are willing to throw the soil have done so, the grave is quickly filled with soil using shovels and hoes.

3.3.5 Carrying the Stones, Sweeping, and Fencing

As men are shoveling the soil back into the grave, women and older men begin to fetch stones to the grave. Among these stones, there should be a long one that is planted on the side corresponding to the head of the deceased as Gelfand (1966: 81) observed among the Karanga of Nyajena. The smaller stones are piled onto the hill made by the soil covering the grave.

According to Mwandayi (2011: 203), it is tabooed among the Shona to carry two stones at a time because of two reasons. First, if done, the spirit of the dead, if aggrieved for any reason, would strike two persons at a time. So, carrying one stone at a time would persuade the aggrieved spirit to strike only one person at a time. Second, carrying two stones at a time may cause the aggrieved spirit to enlist the assistance of two other spirits to help it fight the culprits. The Shona people feel that it is easier to appease one spirit than two or more. When the ritual practitioners are satisfied with the pile of stones, the area around the grave is swept, while the one sweeping is going backward.

Some Shona groups may fence the grave using the branches of a tree called *mutarara*, according to Bullock (1913: 44). Other Shona groups place a branch of a tree called *chizhuzhu* on top of the grave. This tree branch would have been used to sweep the area around the grave. Muchemwa (2002: 36) writes about the branch of *mutarara*, which is placed on top of the grave to ward off evil spirits. Bullock (1927: 268) believes that once the leaves of the branch have withered, (normally placed on a woman's grave) it is believed that the body of the dead person would have burst, and at that stage, the witches cannot devour it at one of their ghoulish meetings. The sweeping is intended to find out if the witches would have desecrated the grave. For a couple of days, early in the morning, the grave is inspected for witches' footprints, whose presence may be

a sign that the grave was violated. After these visits to the grave, most Shona peoples avoid the graves because of their respect for the dead, and to allow the dead to rest peacefully, as Mwandayi (2011: 212) has noted. Family members may return to the grave of their relative only when necessary.

3.3.6 Purification of the Undertakers and the Hut

It is believed that getting involved in the burial rituals makes the undertakers ritually unclean. Hence, all people who would have come in close proximity of the corpse should be purified. In the past, people would go to the nearest river “to wash away their association with the death,” (Rayner, 1962: 66). Nowadays, among some Shona ethnic groups, the ritual cleansing is done at the grave using medicated water. Muchemwa (2002: 43) claims that some Shona groups use a mixture of water, and crushed tree leaves such as *hazvieri*, *mushozhowa*, *musvisvinwa*, and *rugumudzambwa*, and *muzeze* is used to sprinkle the water onto the people. According to Bourdillon (1987: 204), the ritual cleansing is for everyone who would have been involved in the burial. However, the rest of the people may wash their hands and faces using the medicated water, but those who would have come into close contact with the corpse have to completely wash their bodies. Chavhunduka (1994: 58) holds that this purification is imperative because the spirit of the dead is “unpredictable and dangerous,” and appropriate precautions must be taken.

This ritual purification is also performed among other African peoples. Doumbia (2004: 52) reports the ritual cleansing that takes place in a river or lake after burial by the Mande peoples of West Africa. Of course, the Mande go a step further by leaving all the objects used during the burial beside the grave because of a couple of reasons. First, the objects are considered to pass on

bad luck to anyone who touches them. Second, the objects are dangerous and may cause harm to anyone handling them. So, for the Mande of West Africa, it is not only the undertakers who are defiled by their close contact with the corpse, but also the objects used during the burial.

The hut in which the body lies also needs purification, which may be done using water mixed with medicines. Ordinarily, for most Shona groups, the purification of the hut is one of the many responsibilities of the daughters-in-law. According to Bullock 1927: 269), traditionally, if the deceased were a woman, her hut was abandoned, and allowed to dilapidate because of disuse. The possessions of a deceased woman may be sealed away in her hut or granary and should not be used until the inheritance ritual has been performed. If the widower is offered one of the sisters, cousins, or nieces of the departed wife, she may be allowed to use her huts and most of the belongings except cows. Normally, the cows if she had any, are taken by her father or relatives.

3.3.7 Burial by Proxy

Burial by proxy is one of the interesting phenomena of the Shona burial rituals, and it takes several forms. The first one involves a situation where one has died far away from home, and no one knows about his death and burial place. According to Bullock (1913: 47), if a person died away from home, without the knowledge of his family members, he could be buried by proxy later. The person could have been eaten by wild animals, or died in a faraway place, and given a burial by strangers. In such a scenario, the spirit of the deceased could come back home and would make one of the family members sick. His relatives would then consult a diviner, who was likely to confirm the demise of their family member. Since his body could not be located, the

family would collect a goat's head or bones from the veld, which they would bury as if they were burying their relatives. The grave would become the official burial place of the dead and would be used for all ceremonial purposes involving that person.

The second type of burial by proxy concerned a person who would have died away from home and was buried there. Usually, some of his relatives would have been present at his burial.

Bullock (1927: 272) says that in that situation, the most senior member of the relatives attending the burial would take some soil from the grave of the deceased, and would tie it in a black cloth, which was then taken back home for burial. The soil and the black cloth would be buried together with a black goat. As a result, the deceased would have two graves. The one at his home would be used for all ritual purposes by the relatives. The people believed that the spirit of the deceased would be living at the home grave, and not at the grave where his body would have been buried.

Gelfand (1959: 196) reports a slightly different version of the same ritual. He claims that if a person died away from home and were buried there, some Shona ethnical groups would send a relative, even after the burial, to take a stone or a handful of soil from the grave. The soil or stone would be brought home for burial. A black goat would be slaughtered, and together with the stone, would be wrapped in a black blanket for burial. Alternatively, some people would get a small branch of a tree, beat the grave, telling the deceased that they were taking him home. The branch would be pulled for a while and then taken home for a second burial. This second burial of the deceased was compelled by the need to bury a relative at home, where ancestors would receive him. Most African peoples always tried to bury a dead person where he was born as

noted by Doumbia (2004: 151). In pre-colonial Africa, the birthplace was ordinarily the rural home. Nowadays, many Africans try to transport the corpse back to Africa if one dies abroad or in the urban area. Burial or reburial at one's rural home would permit the relatives to perform future rituals concerning the deceased without worrying about the expenses of visiting his far away burial place.

3.3.8 Burial of Premature Babies

Most Shona peoples believe that the death of either a full-term baby or fetus poses a lot of danger to the family and the community. Hence, some specific rituals had to be performed to appease the spirit of a deceased infant. According to Bullock (1913: 46), in ancient times, the Shona got rid of babies such as “twins, malformed children,” and those children who cut their upper teeth first. Babies of that nature were buried with extra precautions. For burial, their bodies were placed in a clay pot, and buried in running water or a swamp. The burial in or near the flowing water was intended to cool their frustration for having died prematurely. Ordinarily, only the grandmother and a few other older women would perform the burial. No mourning and any other rituals were allowed.

Gelfand (1959: 187) alleges that if the deceased baby were still on breast milk, he would be buried with his face pointing upwards, and if this were not done, its mother would become barren. Gelfand further claims that the river or stream on whose bank the baby was buried had to have flowing water throughout the year so that its spirit would be perpetually cooled. In addition to that, he postulates that still-born babies were placed in a clay pot and buried under similar conditions. Again, no further burial rituals were performed for such babies.

Aschwanden (1987: 249) claims that the baby was buried in the river sand, in a *gambe* (broken clay pot). For him, burying the baby in a broken jar was intended to make the baby believe it was still in its mother's womb. When the first rains came, the body was washed out of the jar by the water, and that symbolized its birth. This ritual was intended to mislead the baby into believing that it was normally born just like other children. It also helped in cooling down its anger of having failed to make it into the world. If a pregnant woman died before delivering the baby, Aschwanden (1987: 249) claims that she too was buried near a river. This ritual was believed to cool the spirit of the dead woman and that of the unborn baby in her womb.

3.3.9 Burial of Youths and Unmarried People

In bygone times, the burial of unmarried person was different from that of babies and other adults. This group could include all who died before marriage or before begetting children. The Shona feared that the spirits of such people would be aggrieved because of the unfruitful life led, and were likely to come back into the family to cause harm. There were rituals that were performed or omitted to prevent the departed from seeking recognition as ancestors. For instance, Gelfand (1959: 192) notes that as the corpse of such a person was being transported to the grave, the body was not turned around as would be done for the body of a person who was married. There is also no *magadziro* (making of an ancestor ritual) for the unmarried.

Bullock (1913: 46) asserts that such deceased unmarried people would be buried with a symbolic wife or husband depending on their gender. This symbol could be an animal, roofing pole, grinding stone, or any other symbol of marriage or children. The spirits of those who died

without marriage or begetting children would not be invited to become ancestors as Mbiti (1990: 148) also observes. In support of that, Chitakure (2017: 80) claims that if one died before marriage, the cleansing ceremony, which is intended to make the spirit of the dead an ancestor would not be performed. The main purpose of the cleansing ceremony is to initiate the deceased into ancestorhood. As an ancestor, one's principal responsibility is to protect one's family, and without having one's own family, there is no need of becoming an ancestor. Consequently, the spirit of such a person would be disqualified from enjoying the status of ancestor. However, that does not mean that such a spirit is accursed.

3.3.10 Burial of Chiefs

Chiefs occupy a special place among Shona peoples. Before the colonization of Zimbabwe in 1890, and a few years after that, chiefs, by virtue of being religious and political leaders of their communities, wielded much authority and power, and deserved much respect from their subjects. Consequently, the death of a chief was a matter of greater concern for his subjects. In the past, when the chief was dying, he would be taken away from his home and resettled at a traditional healer's place. As has been already noted, his illness, relocation, and subsequent death would be kept secret by his close family members. If he died, his closest family members would clandestinely bury him, and would not announce his death until after about a month, at a time when they felt that his body had decomposed. Gelfand (1959: 203–204) states that only the nephews and grandchildren of the chief were privy to the information about the chief's demise and his subsequent burial. This information would be publicized when the family felt that the corpse had fully decomposed. This decomposition of the corpse would prevent contesting houses from invading the grave to obtain a piece of the corpse for malicious purposes. When the time to

notify the public about the death of the chief arrived, they would announce that “the mountain had fallen,” (Gelfand, 1959: 204). Soon afterward, there would be a staged public burial at which a bull was killed, and its skin stuffed with material sawn to resemble the human form, which the family would present for burial as if it were the chief’s body.

According to Bullock (1913: 45), in those bygone times, some Shona groups mummified the corpse of the chief by sealing and drying it in a special hut. At the time of burial, a bull would be killed, and its hide would be used to wrap up the corpse of the king for burial. Usually, the burial was in a cave, where his body was placed in a sitting position, sometimes among other mummified corpses belonging to his family. Once a chief was buried in a cave, the hill would be considered sacred.

Bullock (1913: 45), also explores the Makorekore and Watonga’s burial rituals of a chief. He reports that the corpse of a king was placed in a special hut built for that purpose outside the home. Some close relatives would be tasked with the watching of the corpse and the removal of the maggots, which were carefully preserved, for they were believed to carry the spirit of the dead chief. These maggots were eventually buried together with the corpse of the chief. The Makorekore are said to have believed that the dead chief would transform into a lion spirit (*mhondoro*). In anticipation of the *mhondoro*, the grave was not completely sealed. A small opening was left, and it was through it that the lion *mhondoro* was seen every night by the meticulous watchers, in and out of the grave. When the watchers thought that the lion was big enough, they would seal off the hole after the lion would have gone out of the grave, to prevent it

from reentering. That ritual would force the spirit of the dead to live in the lion, until at the point when it was reincarnated into a spirit medium.

3.3.11 The Shadow

According to Bourdillon (1987: 200), a mysterious phenomenon called the shadow (*bvuri*) has been reported among some Shona groups. It is believed that a human being has two shadows—the white shadow and black shadow. The Shona believe that at death, the white shadow should disappear. If it does not vanish as expected, it is assumed that the spirit of the dead person is aggrieved. This anger might have been caused by some error of omission or commission in the performance of the death rituals. The anger may be a result of how the relatives of the dead person would have treated him during his last days of life.

It may also be assumed that the body may have been tampered with, by the witches. If the white shadow does not disappear, the mourners are instructed to get out of the hut in which the corpse is kept. Failure to do so may cause some misfortune happening to one of them because of the displeasure of the spirit. Usually, the close relatives consult a traditional medical practitioner to learn the cause of the displeasure. It is believed that as soon as the issue is addressed, the white shadow should disappear.

Aschwanden (1987: 236) reports the same shadow among the Karanga of Ndanga, Bikita, Masvingo. He claims that his respondents told him that the white shadow is a symbol of a man's soul and it should either become invisible or vanish at death. When it does not vanish, it has several meanings. First, something might have gone wrong in the carrying out of death rituals.

Second, the appearance of the white shadow may be caused by the spirit to delay its burial to allow someone very dear to the dead to arrive, and would disappear as soon as the person arrives. Third, if the deceased is a woman, the white shadow might be a sign of her anger against her husband if he abused her during her physical life. In this case, the husband must compensate the father or guardian of the departed woman for the white shadow to disappear. Fourth, the white shadow may be a sign that the death was caused by a murderer, and if he is present, he should confess his wrongdoings to facilitate the vanishing of the shadow. In the cases, where foul play is suspected, Aschwanden (1987: 236) alleges that all the relatives are gathered into the room where the corpse is, and are requested to get out one by one. It is believed that the white shadow immediately disappears as soon as the culprit walks out of the room.

3.4 POST-BURIAL RITUALS

Post-burial rituals refer to all the rituals that are performed a day or a few days after the deceased has been laid to rest. These rituals may end, a couple of years after the spirit of the deceased has been cleansed by the ritual of *magadziro*. Even though ancestral rituals continue intermittently as long as one remains an ancestor, most of the subsequent ones are not associated with death. Just like both pre-burial and burial rituals, the post-burial ritual should be performed carefully to avoid displeasing the spirit of the dead. If they are not meticulously performed, the spirit of the dead may be aggrieved and may cause serious problems to their living relatives.

3.4.1 Mourning Days

Soon after burial, the head of the family or village may announce the resting period that is known as *mahakurimwi*, which literally means, not working in the fields. Mbiti (1991: 121) postulates that this stoppage of work is a sign of respect for the dead person. This suspension of work starts right from the moment the death is announced until a few days after the burial. For chiefs, a prolonged time of *mahakurimwi* may be observed. Usually, the days of rest may be less than a week or a week at most, for ordinary persons. It seems that in the past, the sacred rest mostly concerned working in the field. However, among some Shona groups, other normal activities are suspended until all funeral rites have been performed. The forbidden activities may include getting married. According to Mbiti (1991: 122), among other African ethnical groups, even normal activities such as washing bodies and clothes, and milking cows may be neglected for some days.

3.4.2 *Gata*

Gata is one of the most important and common post-burial rituals among the Shona peoples, and it refers to the consultation of a diviner to find out the cause of death. Ordinarily, *gata* should be performed about three weeks after burial or even earlier. Rayner (1962: 66) points out that in olden times, *gata* was performed at least one week after death, and before a month after death. However, in situations where it is not performed during this time, it should be done any time before *magadziro*.

Gelfand (1962: 83) argues that the word *gata* derives from the item or piece of cloth that the delegation gives to the diviner before the divination starts. Elsewhere, Gelfand (1966: 82),

reporting about the Karanga of Nyajena, asserts that the consultation should be performed before another ritual called *doro remvura* (ritual of the water) that is performed about three weeks after the burial. Usually, the findings of *gata* are revealed to the family at the *doro remvura* ritual because it gives them an opportunity to gather again as a family. Gelfand (1966: 82), says it is convenient for the Karanga of Nyajena to take advantage of this gathering instead of calling for another one for the purpose of revealing the cause of death.

The sole purpose of *gata* is to find out the cause of the death of the deceased. When a person dies, “there is always suspicion of foul play as a result of witchcraft,” (Mwendayi, 2011: 212). Although the Shona believe that death could be caused by natural forces, they can only rule out foul play after consulting a diviner. In some cases, *gata* is performed to confirm the suspicions that the relatives already have concerning the cause of death. Most people would have consulted diviners when the deceased was still sick and would have been told the causes of the ill-health. Although most *gata* delegates already have an idea as to what would have caused the death of their relative, they remain open to new, and sometimes surprising information concerning the cause.

According to Gelfand (1966: 83), the delegation, which consists of close relatives such as brothers, sons-in-law, and the village head, is sent by the family to do this business. They are expected to go to a specialist diviner who lives far away from the home of the deceased to avoid those who would have been influenced by rumor and gossip. Gelfand (1966: 83) postulates that the consulted diviner is expected to name the members of the delegation and to reveal the sex of the deceased as proof of his prowess. If he fails to do that, the delegation may consider his

findings unreliable, and they may proceed to look for another diviner. In fact, the delegates are encouraged to consult more than one diviner so that they can compare their findings.

Bourdillon (1987: 206–207) observes that the Shona believe that there are usually three causes of death. First, if the deceased would have lived a long life, and if there is no reason to think otherwise, the suspected causes of death are usually natural. These causes include old age and God. If the deceased would have lived a long life, and no other nefarious involvement detected, the diviner is likely to tell the delegation that the cause of death is old age (*kukwegura*). The death of an old person may also be referred to as having been caused by God (*rufu gwaMwari*). In other words, the diviner is telling them that death was inevitable, and no human force would have been involved. If death is caused by either old age or God, the relatives are not very much aggrieved because of its occurrence, for they believe that God has a reason for it. Mbiti (1991: 151) points out that among some African peoples, those dying as a result of being struck by lightning may also be thought of as having died because of God. However, for most Shona people, lightning is usually thought of as being caused by witchcraft.

The second cause of death according to Bourdillon (1987: 206–207) is human, particularly witchcraft. Witchcraft is thought to be the most common cause of death among many Shona peoples, and it has been explored in chapter 2. The third cause of death is spiritual. Most Africans believe that their world is replete with spirits, as Mbiti (1969: 74) has observed. Some of these spirits are good, and others are evil. Although some scholars such as Mbiti (1991: 151) have argued that there is no evidence that the good spirits such as the living-dead cause death, it is believed that they can be deadly unless they are appeased. Generally, it is the evil spirits that

may cause death, and these include alien spirits seeking recognition, and nature spirits known as *zvidhoma*. *Ngozi* (avenging spirit) is also believed to cause sickness and death. A *ngozi* can be either bad or good, depending on the side one is standing. The victims are likely to see *ngozi* as evil, while the relatives of the *ngozi* are likely to see it as a good spirit seeking justice.

Once the *gata* delegation is satisfied with its findings, it comes back home with the feedback, which at first may only be shared with close relatives until a public gathering is convened by the leader of the family, (Gelfand, 1959: 189). Among the Karanga of Nyajena, the much-awaited results of the *gata* may not be announced until the *doro remvura*, which is performed about three weeks after burial. However, this information may be passed on at any convenient time, before the *magadziro* ceremony, if it has not been done already. The gravity of the causes of death and the family's exposure to further harm from the same cause are likely to determine the swiftness with which the delegation may call for a meeting to convey the information.

According to Bourdillon (1987: 207), if the delegation finds out that the death was caused by any of the good spirits, some ritual action must be taken to appease the angry spirit because if not propitiated immediately, it may strike again. If the death was caused by an avenging spirit, its placation is a matter of urgency. As has been explored in chapter 2, the most effective and lasting solution to a *ngozi* is to pay reparations. As a matter of fact, some Shona groups may try to exorcize the avenging spirit, but it does not work out sometimes. If the spirit which would have caused the death is an evil alien spirit, it may be exorcized. If the death were caused by witches, the family may confront the witch with the help of the village head, who in some cases, would have been one of the delegates sent to consult a diviner. Gelfand (1966: 84) reports that in the

past, among some Shona groups, one of the witch's goats was slaughtered, and the witch was expelled from the village. If the witch were not expelled, the family of the departed would use medicines to protect its members and homes from further harm by the same witch.

3.4.3 *Doro Remvura*

Literally, *doro remvura* means the beer of water. It is the ritual that is celebrated about three weeks after the deceased has been buried, and it has several purposes. Bullock (1913: 44) contends that it is intended to quench the thirst of the friends and relatives who would have assisted in the burial of the deceased, and it gives the family an opportunity to set a date for the inheritance and *magadziro* rituals. In support of that, Bourdillon (1987: 208) gives several functions of this ritual. For him, it marks the official end of the mourning period although close family members may continue to mourn until after the *magadziro*. Moreover, it allows the family members of the departed an opportunity to gather again as they did at his funeral, and talk about the affairs of the family. On top of that, this coming together avails to them an opportunity to learn his cause of death from the *gata* delegates. Besides, they may also share the estate of the dead or decide for its safekeeping until further notice. Furthermore, the care of the deceased's family may also be discussed at this ritual. Finally, the ritual is intended to cool the spirit, which may begin to assist its own people although it is not yet a full-fledged ancestor until the *magadziro*. According to Rayner (1962: 66), the goat that may be slaughtered at this ritual is food for both the invisible and visible family members and their neighbors.

Since the Shona believe that any close contact with the corpse may defile people, Mwandayi (2011: 213) contends that apart from cooling the spirit, the *doro remvura* also purifies the burial

participants from the defilement caused by their close contact with the corpse during the burial.

While those who would have participated in the burial would have been cleansed either by washing in the river or using the medicated water at the gravesite, they still need more cleansing, and this time, using beer. While they are not expected to wash their bodies with the beer, the mere partaking in its drinking purifies them. For that purpose, anyone attending the ritual, even if not an ordinary beer taker, should at least take a sip of the beer, and then pass the container to the seasoned beer takers.

Mbiti (1989: 147), reporting about the Ndebele people, refers to the *doro remvura* as the washing of hoes ritual. Elsewhere, the same has been referred to as *masukafoshoro* (washing of shovels ritual). Mbiti (1989: 147), observes that at this ritual, all the implements that would have been used during the burial are washed with beer. In addition to that, some medicine is given to all the children in the family to protect them from the harm that might be caused by their proximity to the corpse. Mbiti (1989: 147) claims that it is not only the human participants that are defiled by their close contact with the corpse during burial but also the objects that are used in the digging of the grave. They too need to be cleansed.

3.4.4 Magadziro

The biggest and most significant post-burial ritual is *magadziro* (making of an ancestor), or *kurova guva* (beating the grave), or *kuchenura mudzimu* (cleansing the ancestor). It is performed at least six months or a year after the burial of the departed depending on the Shona ethnic group involved. Chitakure (2017: 85) alleges that this longer waiting period is intended to allow the corpse to decompose before it can be allowed to come back home as an ancestor. He claims that

if the ritual is performed before the corpse decomposes, the ancestor may come back home in his physical body, and this would scare the family members. They would mistake the ancestor for a bad spirit known as *goritoto* (ghost), which some people claim to have a human body. Mbiti (1989: 147–148) describes the cleansing ceremony as “a ritual celebration of a man’s conquest over death: for death has only disrupted and not destroyed the rhythm of life.” The departed becomes the “living-dead”, the name that Mbiti invented for ancestors, (Mbiti, 1989: 148). Some Shona groups perform the ritual at least a year after burial, (Bullock (1913: 53).

While the ritual should be performed at least six months after the death, Bourdillon (1987: 209–210) notes that circumstances may compel its early or late performance. An early celebration may be done for fear of the witches. If the relatives of the deceased fear that the witches may temper with the spirit of the dead before it becomes an ancestor, they may fast-track its initiation into ancestorhood. The late celebration may be caused by several issues. One of the reasons is that if the spirit does not demand the ritual, the family may delay its performance. Some spirits demand the ritual by causing one of the family members to become sick, or just allowing a misfortune to happen to one of the relatives. A diviner consulted about the sickness is likely to advise the family to perform *magadziro*. In some circumstances, the late celebration of *magadziro* may be caused by the poverty of the family members who are directly responsible for preparing the ceremony. In bygone times, the performance of the ritual could be delayed if there was no one willing to inherit the widows. Normally, those who were eager to inherit the widows would not delay its celebration since it was at or immediately after this ceremony that the widows could be inherited. The widows themselves would put pressure on the responsible family members to perform the ritual so that they (widows) would be free to remarry.

According to Bourdillon (1987: 214), *magadziro* signifies several things among the Shona. First, the ritual is performed to overcome the anxiety caused by death, and to settle the tension between the spirit of the dead and the members of the family. This tension may be caused by the stringent requirement to perform death rituals perfectly. Second, the *magadziro* is intended to cool the spirit, which after death would have been wandering about. Third, it is intended to initiate the spirit into the ancestral world, and to bring it back home and incorporate it as a spiritual and invisible member of the family.

Mwandayi (2011: 218) affirms the importance of this ritual. He says that after burial, the spirit of the dead has no fixed abode and is believed to wander about. Death makes the spirit a vagabond. This wandering about is believed to be tedious and consequently displeases the spirit. It yearns to be brought back home and become an active invisible and spiritual member of the family.

Unfortunately, it should wait for the performance of *magadziro* for it to be able to come back home. The same ritual is also crucial for the family of the deceased because death makes their home dark, (Mwandayi, (2011: 218). This darkness refers to the home's defilement. So, the ritual is intended to purify the home and its inhabitants. Although the ritual may be delayed, most Shona people believe that relatives of the deceased should try all within their power to perform it within the stipulated time.

Magadziro is not performed for every departed person, for there are qualifications to be met and disqualifications to be avoided. Mbiti (1989: 147) notes that only married people are allowed to become the "living-dead" after their death. Those people who die as babies, youths, or unmarried

adults, cannot become ancestors. Since, *magadziro* makes ancestors, the unmarried deceased have no *magadziro* performed for them. Also, the people who die of certain diseases such as leprosy, tuberculosis, and epilepsy may not have this ritual performed for them to prevent them from becoming ancestors. It is believed that if they are allowed to become ancestors, they may pass on the disease to one of their family members. Moreover, Bullock (1927: 273) notes that *magadziro* is not allowed to be performed in November for the reasons he does not elaborate.

Like at most Shona rituals, a lot of beer is brewed for the *magadziro* ritual. Bullock (1913: 53–54) describes how the ritual was performed in Mashonaland, in the past. Relatives and friends of the deceased would start arriving for the ritual a couple of days before the day of the ritual. On the day of the ritual, very early in the morning, the ceremonial leader would lead a group of the departed's family members to the grave, leaving all other participants at home. In the past, some groups would take a goat to the grave. Nowadays, most Shona groups take some beer in a sacred clay container called *pfuko* to the grave. As the delegation proceeds to the grave, they sing, ululate, and dance. Upon their arrival at the grave, they break the fence surrounding it and may slaughter a goat, if they have brought one. The ceremonial leader deeps the branch of *muzeze* tree into the mixture of blood and medicines, and sprinkles it on the grave. Some beer is also poured on the grave. The ritual practitioner then invites the spirit of the deceased to accompany them back home. In the past, before the delegates left the grave, they would scatter the entrails of the goat, and pour the beer on the grave, and then head back home amid much jubilation.

Gelfand's (1959: 190) narrative of the same ritual shares commonalities with the one given by Bullock. For Gelfand, it is the son-in-law who acts as the ritual leader of the delegation that goes

to the grave early in the morning. He collects the branch of wattle tree (*muzeze*), which he places in a pot of water. As they approach the grave, the son-in-law should turn his back to the grave, moving backward and sprinkling water on the way, while facing the procession. When he is about to reach the grave, he faces it, and the ritual practitioner of the family may sweep the grave, and remove one of the stones. Beer is then poured into the hole where the stone has been removed. After some beer has been consumed by the delegates, the stone is placed back to its place, and a prayer of invitation to the ancestor is said before the procession departs for home.

Elsewhere, Gelfand (1966: 85) reporting about the Karanga of Nyajena's performance of *magadziro*, postulates that the *muzukuru* (nephew) is the spokesman during the ritual. After the ancestor has been brought back home, a goat and a cow or ox, depending on the gender of the deceased, are slaughtered. The cow or ox brings the spirit of the dead into the home. Some *sadza* (thick porridge) is prepared using *zviyo* (millet). When both the sacred meat and *sadza* are ready, all the close family members gather near the threshold, and a prayer is offered. Once the prayer is done, the sacred practitioner may distribute the *sadza* and meat to the people. Once the people finish eating the sacred meal, beer is poured on the ground as *musedzero* (wash down). The remaining sacred beer is given to the people. As soon as the cow or ox is killed, the *muzukuru* makes the *rukanda* (bangle) from the right hoof of the animal, which is supposed to come off in a complete circle and is fitted into the right wrist of the *nevanji* (firstborn).

Rayner (1962: 67) reports that once the procession reaches the grave, and the ritual practitioner has poured some beer on it, the spirit of the deceased is persuaded to climb a nearby tree. Once the delegates are convinced that the spirit of the deceased has climbed up the tree, a small branch

of that tree is cut and is immediately covered by a cloth to prevent the spirit from escaping. Amid jubilation and great celebration, the branch on which the ancestor is riding is dragged back home. The delegation is met by those who would have remained at home amid much singing, ululation, and dancing.

3.4.5 Inheritance Ritual

The inheritance (*nhaka*) and the *magadziro* ceremonies are usually celebrated concurrently, or one immediately after the other. Rayner (1962: 68) says that the *nhaka* ritual is performed on the morning following the *magadziro*. What is inherited is the name of the deceased, his estate, and wives, if he is a man. If the departed is a woman, her name, personal property, and husband may be inherited in almost the same manner. Holleman (1952: 355) notes that among the Hera of Chivhu, the husband of the deceased woman has the obligation to identify all the estate of his dead wife, and this should be shown to her father or guardian. Although the husband and his family are entitled to some property of the departed woman, and half of the grains in the granary, “it is left to the discretion of the woman’s relatives how much of this property they will leave with the husband,” Holleman, (1952: 355). The son-in-law has the obligation to disclose everything that belongs to his late wife because of the fear of the avenging spirit of his deceased wife. Holleman (1952: 355) further asserts that if the deceased woman’s relatives want to leave one of the beasts with the widower, they may have to consult a diviner to find out if the spirit would be happy about it.

Bourdillon (1987: 215) points out that the name of the male deceased may only be inherited by his eldest son, but the position of the head of the family may be inherited by any other qualifying

relative. Whoever is inheriting the name, would be required to sit down on the reed mat, while other family members sit closer by. The ritual leader utters a few words of prayer after which the person sitting on the reed mat is declared the inheritor of the name of the deceased. Among some Shona groups, his head may be washed and anointed with oil. The family members present may offer gifts to the name inheritor. There is also singing and dancing to celebrate the acquisition of the name by the inheritor.

According to Bullock (1913: 47), in addition to the name of the deceased, the oldest son, even if he belongs to a junior wife, inherits the estate of his father. The property that he inherits should also cater to the needs of his brothers, particularly assisting them in paying their bridewealth. If the deceased owned anything to anyone, the inheritor takes full responsibility for the repayment of the debts left unsettled. In cases where the eldest son of the dead is still too young to take charge of the inherited property, one of the brothers of the deceased may be asked to hold it for him. Bullock (1913: 50) notes that among some Shona groups, if there is no living relative on the male side, the son of the deceased's eldest sister (*muzukuru*) may be chosen as the heir. Gelfand (1966: 89) holds that if the deceased is a married woman, her personal property is given to her own relatives, particularly her father, who may distribute some of it to her children. However, he is not required to do so.

The most elaborate of the inheritance rituals concerns the distribution of the widows of the departed. Gelfand (1966: 84–87) presents a detailed explanation of how the Karanga of Nyajena celebrates this aspect of the *nhaka* ritual. On the day following the *magadziro*, the *muzukuru* takes the *vuta* (weapons) belonging to the deceased, which would have been washed in a river

before the ritual. The *muzukuru* is compensated for the *masukavuta* (washing the weapons) duty. The weapon is then placed on a reed mat on which about three people are seated. The widow or widows are then asked to jump over the weapon as proof that they would have been faithful to their deceased husband from the time of the death until this ceremony. Gelfand (1959: 191) states that among some Shona groups, this jumping over the weapon is done for three times, back and forth. It is believed that if a widow, who would have committed adultery during this period, disregards the taboo by jumping over the weapon, her private organs may be diseased, or she may fall on top of the weapon. If the widow has committed adultery, her father or guardian is required to pay a fine. In such a case, the old *vuta* should be discarded and replaced by a new one to enable other wives to perform the same ritual of *kudarika vuta* (jumping the weapons). The *vuta* is handed over to the inheritor who upon receiving it, agrees to inherit the widow. Bullock (1913: 52) observes that if any bridewealth is outstanding, the inheritor has to pay up the arrears. Also, in the event of a divorce between the new husband and the inherited widow, the inheritor may claim back some of the bridewealth from the father or guardian of the woman.

Some Shona groups that were observed by Bullock give the widow some water or beer, which she pours on the head of the chosen inheritor, who would be sitting on the reed mat, with an unstrung bow of the deceased, (Bullock, 1913: 54–55). The widow also gives some water to the elected inheritor to drink, and the chosen man is allowed to refuse the offer if he does not want to inherit the woman. In that case, he is supposed to utter, “*jira iguru*,” which literally means, the blanket is too big. He also washes off the mixture of water and beer that would have been poured on his head. Some Shona groups call this washing off of the mixture, *kushamba nhaka*. The rejected widow may try her luck with other qualified contenders.

Among other Shona ethnic groups, Gelfand (1959: 191) notes that the widow is handed the knobkerrie of the deceased husband, and she is supposed to hand it over to the relative of the deceased husband by whom she would like to be inherited. If she does not want to be inherited, she should put it down on the reed mat. The knobkerrie is handed to her three times, and each time, she puts it down on the mat. After the knobkerrie has been handed to her for the fourth time, she should give it to the grandson of the deceased to show that she does not want to be inherited as a wife, but only as a dependent.

An older woman, who is no longer interested in conjugal interactions, may select one of her own sons to inherit her. This son would be required to take care of his mother. If one of the younger widows refuses to elect an inheritor among those qualified, she is free to go and remarry elsewhere, but she has to leave the home of the deceased husband. If she has not given birth to a sufficient number of children, her father or guardian may be asked to return part of the bridewealth. Those sons who do not get the *nhaka* women may be paired with the sisters to obtain the bridewealth that would be paid upon their marriages.

If the deceased is a woman, who has died prematurely before providing the husband with enough children, the father-in-law or guardian of the dead woman may be obliged to give the widower another woman, particularly, the sister or niece of the deceased woman, (Chitakure, (2016: 45). The woman who inherits her sister's or aunt's husband is called *chimutsamapfihwa*, which means the one who revives the cooking. Chitakure (2016: 45) notes that *mapfihwa* (the stones that balance a pot when cooking) are used both literally and symbolically. Literally, they refer to

the cooking that the new woman would do for the family. Symbolically, the cooking refers to the sexual activities that would be revived by the inheritor. Either way, the cooking produces and sustains life. The inherited man has to pay a nominal bridewealth for the *chimutsamapfihwa*.

Among some Shona groups, some months after inheriting a widow, the new husband is obliged to perform the *sendekavuta* ritual, (Gelfand, 1959: 195). *Sendekavuta* is a compound word from two Shona words, *sendeka*, which means to put something in a standing position against a wall, tree, or stone, and *vuta*, which means weapon. This ritual, which is part of the woman inheritance, is intended to publicize the *nhaka* to the people who may not have been present at the ritual. Beer is brewed and friends and relatives are invited. The goat, which is known as *sendekavuta* is slaughtered and eaten by the guests. There is also a lot of dancing and singing. The performance of this ritual puts an end to post-death rituals. Of course, there will be other rituals to be offered from time to time in remembrance of the ancestors, but are not closely linked to his death and burial. Usually, such periodical rituals are referred to as *doro renyota* (beer to quench the ancestral thirst).

3.4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated the existence of similarities and differences in death rituals performed by some Africans, and the importance and interdependence of the relationship between the living and the deceased members of the African family. The dead and the living family members need each other. While death is so destructive and painful, it does not cut off the relationship between the departed and their living family members. The departed rely on their

family members for proper burial rituals, which will enable them to become ancestors. The living family members depend on their ancestors for protection, blessings, and inspiration. The eagerness with which the Shona perform these rituals, confirms their unwavering belief in life after death. As attested by the reviewed scholars, death is a transition from this visible, physical, and limited life, to a new spiritual, eternal, and invisible life as an ancestor. Although death is feared and evaded by all means necessary, the Shona accept its inevitability and appreciate the eternal life and unlimited powers that it gives to those who become ancestors. They say, “it takes a village to raise an African kid.” Perhaps the same adage is equally true about making an ancestor—for it takes the same village to make an ancestor.

Although most of the reviewed researchers dealt with death rituals, their studies were done among other Shona ethnicities, and not among the Karanga of Nyajena. Despite the ritual similarities among Shona ethnicities, there are also differences in the praxis and significance of rituals. For example, Bourdillon researched the Shona peoples, but he does not mention the Karanga of Nyajena in detail. Aschwanden, in his great work, researched the Karanga of Ndanga. The prolific writer, Gelfand, researched other Shona ethnicities. His research among the Karanga of Nyajena was confined to Muchibwa Hospital—an area influenced by Western medicines. On top of that, his research was not mainly concerned with Karanga death rituals. Mbiti, another academic giant in African Traditional Religion, briefly mentions the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe, and did not study the Shona. Bullock, whose work is monumental in understanding the Shona death rituals as they were practiced in the past, did his research among the Makorekore and VaTonga people, and not among the Karanga of Nyajena. Muchemwa and Mwandayi discuss death rituals in detail, but their purpose was to justify inculturation. Doumbia

and Imasogie did their research in other parts of Africa, not Zimbabwe. Shoko's research among the Karanga of Mberengwa is monumental in this area. However, the people of Mberengwa have intermarried with the Ndebele people hence, their death rituals have been influenced by the Ndebele culture. Shoko also explores the rituals in brief. Gundani's article on *Kurova Guva* explores this ritual in detail. However, it focuses on this ritual alone, and there is a need to explore other rituals as well.

In addition to the above comments, some of the reviewed scholars mention death rituals just in passing because their studies were not aimed at death ritual in particular. Moreover, none of the reviewed scholars ever wrote a manual for death rituals, as this research does. A manual of death rituals is crucial for posterity. Since death rituals differ from one place to another, there is a need to study the Karanga of Nyajena. Hence, there is a serious gap in the knowledge provided by other scholars, and this work intends to contribute in its little way to the body of knowledge in this area.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS: CAUSES OF SICKNESS AND DEATH, PRE-BURIAL, AND BURIAL RITUALS

4. 1 INTRODUCTION

All the research findings of this study will be presented under four themes, namely, causes of sickness and death, pre-burial rituals, burial rituals, and post-burial rituals. Chapter 4 deals with the first three themes that have been grouped into three sections, while the research findings for post-burial rituals will be explored in chapter 5. Chapter 4 begins by presenting the biographical profile of the participants. This tabled information applies to both chapters 4 and 5. The fieldwork was done from December 6, 2019 to January 10, 2020, and a total of fifteen participants (nine men and six women) with ages ranging from thirty-eight to ninety were interviewed. The participants live in ten different villages in Nyajena. The average time of each interview was thirty minutes, although some interviews lasted close to an hour. The symbols, P1, P2, . . . , and P15 stand for participant (P) and the position (1) of the interview, were used in coding and analyzing the data. So, P1 stands for the first participant to be interviewed.

In addition to the symbols, pseudonyms were used to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The participants were chosen because of their knowledge and expertise in the praxis of death

rituals. The respondents were recommended for the interviews by village heads, other participants, and at times, by other villagers. Participants came from different villages, which were chosen randomly, but also according to the referrals made by previous interviewees. Since this study followed qualitative ethnographic design, the report synthesizes what the majority of participants said and what was observed by this researcher. Occasionally, a particular participant may be quoted verbatim if what was said was unique or incongruent with what the majority of the participants reported.

Although all the data provided by all respondents was important in pursuing the objectives of this research, all the ritual practitioners and teachers were my key respondents. There were eight key respondents, namely, Langton, Esther, Peter, Martha, Matthew, Agatha, Thomas, and Michael. The first six respondents were my key interviewees because, they, by virtue of their traditional positions as village heads, are considered Karanga ritual practitioners. Even though Thomas and Michael, are not traditional ritual practitioners, they had tremendous knowledge of the ritual practices of Nyajena. In their interviews they shared their experiences in the praxis of death rituals. All the above-mentioned respondents had immense knowledge of these rituals to an extent that they provided more data than asked for.

Chapter 4 is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the causes of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena. This section briefly explores these causes and the cultural changes that have taken place as perceived by the interviewees. The causes of sickness and death are first summarized in a table, and then presented in a detailed narrative. This section acts as a prelude to the second and third sections. The second section deals with pre-burial rituals by

providing a summarized table of the rituals, their significance, and cultural changes that have happened. The table is then followed by a detailed description of the rituals. The narrative has three parts, namely, the praxis of the ritual, its significance, and the cultural changes concerning the ritual in question as experienced by the participants. The third section deals with burial rituals, and it takes the format of the second section.

It should be noted that the research findings reported in both chapter 4 and 5 include the observations of one funeral and one *magadziro* (making of an ancestor) ritual by this researcher. Both the summaries and narratives are synthesized from the data collected from the participants and the observations made. Where necessary, the pseudonym of the participant is mentioned, particularly when the information reported is exceptional or affirms an important perspective as has already been said above. It should be noted that chapters 4 and 5 deal with fieldwork research findings, though, where necessary, some published researchers may be quoted to bolster or contrast a view that was offered by the participants.

4. 2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

TABLE 4.1

PARTICIPANT IDENTITY	GENDER	AGE	OCCUPATION	RELIGION
P1 Langton	Male	80	Farmer/Village Head	ATR
P2 Esther	Female	90	Farmer/Ritual Practitioner	ATR

P3 Peter	Male	70	Farmer/Former Teacher	ATR
P4 Martha	Female	76	Farmer/Ritual Practitioner	ATR
P5 Sarah	Female	56	Farmer	ATR
P6 Judas	Male	50	Miner	ATR
P7 Maria	Female	38	Farmer/Builder	ATR
P8 Thomas	Male	40	Teacher	ATR
P9 Agatha	Female	60	Farmer/Village head	ATR & CH
P10 Matthew	Male	56	Traditional Healer	ATR & CH
P11 Linda	Female	70	Spirit Medium	ATR & CH
P12 Harry	Male	79	Farmer	ATR & CH
P13 Michael	Male	48	Farmer	ATR & CH
P14 James	Male	87	Farmer	ART & CH
P15 Jack	Male	68	Farmer	ATR & CH
	No. of men	9		
	No. Women	6		

Key: ATR — African Traditional Religion, CH — Christianity

4.3 SUMMARY OF THEMES AND CATEGORIES EMERGING FROM THE DATA

The sub-themes recorded in table 2 came from the interviews and observations done during the fieldwork work. This section includes only one category of cultural changes experienced in the causes of sickness and death by the Karanga of Nyajena. Unlike the sub-sequent themes, this

theme does not have the category of significance because it deals with causes of sickness and death. Where something worth evaluating is mentioned, its significance is explored concurrently with the description of the praxis.

4.3.1 THEME 1: CAUSES/THEMES OF SICKNESS AND DEATH

The participants were asked to describe the Karanga traditional causes of sickness and death, and what may have changed in the described causes. The information recorded here reflects both the data, which came directly from the participants, and also from the researcher's observation of the interviewees, and the patterns drawn from both the data and observations. It should be noted that although the above questions were preplanned, other impromptu questions were asked in the pursuit of clarification of the things said or not said by the participants. The interviews were non-formal, hence, the flexibility.

TABLE 4.2

SUB-THEME/ CAUSE	PRAXIS/BELIEFS	DISTRIBUTION	CULTURAL CHANGES
God (<i>Mwari</i>)	Death of very old persons, and every day, seasonal ailments are believed to come from God.	All interviewed people mentioned it.	Some participants pointed at old age, not God, as the cause of sickness or death.
Ancestors (<i>Vadzimu</i>)	Aggrieved ancestors may withdraw their protection from their family members, who become vulnerable to	All participants mentioned it.	Some participants blamed certain diseases such as cancer, cancer, AIDS, and so on.

	attacks by witches and evil spirits.		
Avenging spirits (<i>Ngozi</i>)	This is the most feared cause. It is the spirit of the aggrieved person, which comes back to haunt the perpetrators.	All participants mentioned it.	Nowadays perpetrators of crime may be jailed. However, they should also pay compensation.
Alien spirits (<i>Mashavi</i>)	Spirits who fail to become ancestors may seek appeasement from alien families. They may cause illness in the person they want to possess.	All participants mentioned them.	Very few people appease alien spirits. Diseases thought to be caused by <i>mashavi</i> are now attributed to biological causes.
Witches (<i>Varoyi</i>)	Witches are the most notorious and vilest of all the causes of sickness and death. These are human beings who possess secret powers which they use to harm others.	All participants believed that the majority of sicknesses and deaths are caused by witches.	Other biological causes such as cancer, AIDS, and malaria were mentioned.

4.4 THEME 1: CAUSES OF SICKNESS AND DEATH IN DETAIL

The respondents mentioned witchcraft, avenging spirits, God, ancestors, and alien spirits as causes of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena. Although all of them accepted that there are also biological causes of illness and death such as malaria, diarrhea, cholera, and so on, they all believed that either witchcraft or spirits would have caused those biological causes or organisms to affect a particular person, and not another. So, like Bourdillon (1987: 173) rightly observes among most Shona peoples, most diseases and misfortunes are explained in terms of witchcraft by the Karanga of Nyajena. Why would a mosquito target one person and not the

other? Why would bacteria infect one person but not the other? Although the Karanga may know the natural cause of a misfortune, such as murder or accident, they may want to know why that particular person was murdered or involved in an accident at that particular time. Usually, the answer to the preceding question is almost always witchcraft as observed by Bourdillon (1987: 173). This section briefly explores these causes, and evaluates the cultural changes that have happened in the Karanga's understanding of these causes and their effects.

4.4.1 Sub-Theme: Witchcraft

All my respondents mentioned witchcraft as the number one cause of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena. They claimed that most people who die are victims of witchcraft. They also asserted that there are two ways in which witches can cause sickness or death. First, they may directly bewitch someone by casting their spells or using any of the numerous nefarious methods that they have at their disposal. Second, they may indirectly cause illness by taking advantage of a person who is already ill and weakened by some natural sickness. The participants were all in agreement that witches are evil people who possess mysterious and secret power to harm others. They mentioned many forms of witchcraft such as night witchcraft, agricultural witchcraft, sexual witchcraft, *rukwa*, *divisi*, *muposo*, and so on. They also mentioned that witches do their business in the dark while naked, and have nocturnal feasts at night where they devour human flesh. As confirmed by Gelfand (1967: 31–32), the Karanga believe that witches employ familiars such as animals, birds, and reptiles to help them attack their victims.

However, there was some disagreement on *rukwa*, which is a mysterious power that is used to increase one's agricultural produce. Some participants argued that *rukwa* is not some form of

witchcraft, but is used to protect one's property from thieves, which is a good thing. However, Jack noted that *rukwa* becomes witchcraft if the possessor does not have an antidote to reverse the affected repentant transgressors. In that situation, the thief may end up dying, which makes *rukwa* evil, and the owner a witch.

4.4.2 Sub-Theme: Avenging Spirits

Avenging spirits (*ngozi*) are ranged next to witchcraft in causing sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena. A *ngozi* is a spirit of a person who was murdered or died in an accident, or someone who died angry because of something that would have happened to him or her. Gelfand (1962: 124) defines *ngozi* as the spirit of a murdered or deliberately poisoned person, who would have died aggrieved and would have carried that grievance into the spirit world. If not appeased by the payment of compensation to his family, the spirit of such a person comes back to haunt the family of the perpetrator. Symptoms include but are not limited to inexplicable, successive, and sudden death of the family members of the perpetrator, bad luck, inexplicable illness, and so on. According to Gelfand (1966: 71), if the *ngozi* is of one's own mother, the perpetrator's children may become critically ill or may even die.

Most participants gave examples of families whose members were victims of the avenging spirits. They also mentioned the amount of compensation that was paid to appease the angry spirit in some of the examples. Maria mentioned a recent case in which the family whose relative had died in a fist fight had received fifteen cows as compensation for the murdered relative. She mentioned that since the murdered person was an old man, there was no demand for a wife as

could have happened if the deceased was an unmarried man. The cattle were said to be in the care of the deceased man's brother since his only son is working in South Africa.

The avenging spirit is feared and dreaded because it attacks the extended family members of the perpetrator indiscriminately. The perpetrator is likely to be spared so that he can pay or arrange the payment of the compensation. Although all participants mentioned the seriousness of the avenging spirit, they all believed that it was good because it seeks justice. They argued that its effects could not be equated to a random killing of innocent people. It enforces the moral standards of the land, and victims only perish if they do not give heed to the warnings given in the form of sickness and bad luck.

4.4.3 Sub-Theme: God

Also, mentioned as the cause of sickness and death was God (*Mwari*). Bullock (1913: 66) asserts that Mwari, the Supreme Being of the Shona people "is passive, and controls lightning and rain." Before the colonization of Zimbabwe, the Karanga, like all other Shona ethnic groups, believed that God was ubiquitous, but could be contacted directly and on special occasions, at Matopos Caves also known as Matonjeni, (Gelfand, 1967: 20). Daneel (1970: 15) identifies Mwari as the 'final authority' behind the Shona people's ancestors, and was only consulted in times of drought or national crises.

My participants concurred that God, as one of the causes of illnesses and death, can be understood in two ways. First, he is believed to be the cause of natural sicknesses such as influenza, minor headaches and stomach aches, childhood ailments, and so on. These are minor

sicknesses that are not expected to kill anyone if treated with herbal medicines on time. These diseases come and go but should not cause death. Second, God is believed to allow the death of people who are advanced in age. If a person has lived a full life to old age, naturally, God allows him to join the ancestors. Although relatives may give medication to such a person, the objective is mainly palliative because the Karanga know that at a certain age, life should end. Of course, since life is sacred, the Karanga do not allow euthanasia. For them, the death of very old people should be a result of natural causes (God). It should be noted that God is never blamed for such misfortunes but merely acknowledged as the cause.

4.4.4 Sub-Theme: Ancestors

Ancestors are believed to cause sickness of their family members as a means of communication, particularly when they are angry. There are many things that can enrage ancestors. For instance, neglecting to perform traditional rituals, incest, murder, neglect of one's parents, and disregarding the observance of the ancestral resting day may upset ancestors. In a different study, Gelfand (1966: 62) observes that ancestors can be upset if one of their family members goes to live in town or elsewhere, away from the family's rural home. Once they get angry, the family or community may suffer the consequences. However, there were disagreements concerning the method that ancestors use to punish their living relatives. Some respondents, such as Maria and Peter argued that ancestors do not quite cause sicknesses, but only withdraw their protection, which makes their relatives vulnerable to attacks by witches and other forces of destruction. This perspective agrees with Gelfand's findings among the Makorekore, (1962: 124).

The interviewees also quickly pointed out that ancestors do not allow the death of a family member even if repentance has not been offered. However, other interviewees argued that ancestors actually attack their wayward family members, and may even cause their death. This view is shared by Kayode (1984: 19) when he asserts that “Ancestors punish the neglectful and disobedient and are particularly severe on breaches of discipline and of the duties which each member of the family owes to one another and their head.” This view implies that ancestors actively punish the wrongdoers. Jack argued that once an ancestor has spilt blood, then it needs to be cleansed or even exorcized.

4.4.5 Sub-Theme: Alien Spirits

Alien Spirits were also mentioned as another cause of illness. All my respondents asserted that alien spirits are the spirits of foreigners or strangers who seek recognition among strangers. These spirits would have failed to become ancestors among their own people, so, they search for appeasement elsewhere. This recognition is solicited in exchange for skills such as healing, divination, hunting, fishing, fighting, and so on. This perspective is confirmed by Rayner (1962: 99–101) elsewhere, where he states that in the past, these wandering spirits “alighted on some men and granted them special gifts,” and were appeased in repayment for the gifts they bestowed on their hosts. Whenever, the spirit identifies a possible host, it makes him sick, but does not kill him. His family members are likely to consult a diviner who then informs them of the demands of the alien spirit. If accepted, some beer is brewed in honor of the spirit. All the participants in this study concurred that sicknesses, which is deemed to have been caused by alien spirits have declined because most people no longer care to appease them.

4.4.6 Category: Cultural Changes

The Karanga beliefs about the causes of death and sickness have significantly changed mostly because of the establishment of hospitals and the demonization of traditional practices by Christians. When a person is sick with what is considered a natural ailment such as influenza, most Karanga people look for herbs to give to that person. Ordinarily, these minor sicknesses are believed to come from God through nature. However, if the sickness lingers on or is very serious, the sick person goes to the clinic or hospital. Most patients do not try to go to the traditional healers first because witchcraft may not be suspected at this point. Most people now believe that there are biological and natural causes of sicknesses. They accept that mosquitoes cause malaria. They accept that cancer is one of the major causes of death. They also accept that some diseases are infectious. It seems that the natural causes have been accepted by most Karanga people thereby lessening the accusations on witches.

However, if the ailing person is taken to the hospital to receive Western medical care to no avail, the fear that the sickness might have been caused by witchcraft creeps in. The patient may be taken to a traditional healer, or his relatives may visit a diviner to find out the cause of his sickness. This consultation may be done when the person is still hospitalized. It seems that when sickness becomes more serious, the relatives are likely to go back to their traditions, which sometimes brings about tension between the Karanga conservatists and Karanga Christians. This is prevalent to people who live in the rural areas. If they consult a diviner, they are likely to be told that witchcraft, the avenging spirit, ancestors, God, or alien spirits are the causes of the sickness or even death. What this means is that, if the sickness is quickly cured after taking natural herbs, visiting the local clinic, or the hospital, the diviner may not be consulted

concerning the cause. But if the illness becomes more serious, or the ill person dies, then the diviner may be consulted.

However, the diviner is not allowed to name the witch because of the Witchcraft Suppression Act Chapter 9:19: Ord. 14/1899, Acts 18/1989 (s. 11)., 22/2001, which outlaws the imputation of anyone for using non-natural means in causing disease in any person or animal. Despite the criminalization of naming witches, some diviners still do it, though they can face litigation if reported. Some Karanga use the traditional means of healthcare as a last resort. Even those people who refuse to go to the hospital when they are ill, they are likely to be taken to the hospital against their will by members of their families when the illness becomes more serious. At the hospital, the sick person and his family are told of the biological causes of the sickness.

It seems that the Karanga have benefited immensely from both the traditional and Western healthcare systems. Most of them always try both healthcare systems to their own advantage. However, some Christian ministers forbid their own followers to use both Western and traditional healthcare systems. Such churches believe in faith healing. Some members of these churches have been criticized for failing to immunize their children or using Western family planning methods. The participants named a few members of such churches who live in their villages.

On the other hand, some Karanga of Nyajena use all the three methods of healing namely, hospitals, traditional healers, and Christian faith healers. Those Karanga who are Christians, are reported to start with faith healing and prayers. If the patient does not recuperate, they go to the

local clinics or hospitals. There are at least four local clinics in Nyajena, namely, Guwa Clinic, Musvovi Clinic, Nyikavanhu Clinic, and Renco Mine clinic. There is only one government hospital called Muchibwa, which is the only referral center in Nyajena. If the illness cannot be cured at Muchibwa, the patient may be referred to Morgenster Hospital, which belongs to the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. This hospital has more advanced medical equipment and acts as the hospital of choice for broken bones, pregnant women, and eye patients. However, some patients may be taken to Chiredzi Hospital, Masvingo General Hospital, or any other hospital deemed appropriate by their families and the medical practitioner who would have referred them.

If the patient becomes more seriously ill, he is taken to one of the major hospitals. If nothing changes, the family may use both hospitals and traditional healers. It looks like the Karanga of Nyajena are enjoying the best of the three worlds. This phenomenon may be called trite religiosity. He who has three ways of killing a cat stands a better chance of succeeding than the one who has only one method. The people of Nyajena have traditional healers, faith healers, and hospitals, and some use all at some point in their lives. It seems that the cultural changes experienced in this aspect are more beneficial to the people of Nyajena. The biggest challenge that was mentioned by the participants is that, some people may delay taking the sick person to the hospital, while using traditional medicines to no avail. By the time they take the sick person to the hospital, it would be too late, and the patient dies.

Judas suggested that people should first go to the hospital, and if they do not become better, they should go to traditional and faith healers. However, Esther disagreed with Judas, arguing that

both Western and African medicines should be tried simultaneously. While the Western medical practices have become more acceptable to the Karanga of Nyajena, there is still doubt as to the causes of sickness that Westerners give. According to Thomas, “Yes, there could be gems and viruses that cause diseases, but where do they come from? I believe that they are caused by witches and evil spirits. I think that we are talking about the same thing.”

This study found out that many people still consider witchcraft to be the main killer of their relatives even though they know of bacteria, viruses, and other biological causes of sickness and death.

4.5. THEME 2: PRE-BURIAL RITUALS

The following questions were asked:

1. Describe the Karanga pre-burial rituals that were/are performed from the time someone is terminally ill, up to just before the corpse is taken out of the house for burial;
2. What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?; and,
3. Has any of these rituals changed?

The table below and the subsequent detailed narrative reflect the data that were directly provided by the participants, and the interpretations of that data and observations made by this researcher.

The preplanned questions were only used as guidelines, and participants could provide any information pertaining to the topic. Occasionally, questions for clarification were asked. Most of these interviews took the form of ordinary conversations.

TABLE 4.3

SUB-THEME (RITUALS)	CATEGORY (PRAXIS)	CATEGORY (SIGNIFICANCE)	CATEGORY (CHANGES)
Revealing the witches (<i>Bembera</i>)	Consulting a diviner. Gathering villagers and threatening to name the witches.	1. Forcing the witch to reverse the effects of witchcraft. 2. Persuading the witch to relent.	1. Witchcraft Suppression Act forbids the naming of witches. 2. <i>Bembera</i> is rarely performed.
Divination (<i>Kuvhunzira/Gumbwa</i>)	Consulting a diviner by the whole village is done when a person is seriously ill.	1. To find out the cause of illness. 2. To get treatment for the ill person.	1. People may take the ill person to hospital. 2. Christian “prophets” may be consulted.
Relocating the patient (<i>Kusengudza</i>)	This is the relocation of an ill person to a healer or a relative’s home.	1. To provide new environment for recuperation. 2. Going away from the witches who may have caused the sickness.	Nowadays the ritual happens between the rural and town homes or hospitals.
Accompaniment/Watching/ Waiting (<i>Kurindira</i>)	A close relative should keep watch of the dying person. Nobody should be allowed to die alone.	1. For accompaniment. 2. To close the eyes and mouth, and fold the arms and legs soon after death. 3. To notify others of the occurrence of death.	It is done for people who die at home. In hospitals the nurses may keep watch of the seriously ill person.
Visiting the sick (<i>Kuzovona mugwere</i>)	All people who are related to the dying person are expected to pay him a visit before he dies.	1. Showing solidarity. 2. Offering counseling to those already in anticipatory grief.	It is still done in the rural areas, and hospitals. However, hospitals limit the time and number of visitors.
Burning python fat (<i>Kupisa mafuta eshato</i>)	This ritual is performed if a terminally ill person switches between comatose	1. It is believed that people who would have handled python fat may take long to die. 2. Death may be	Not performed.

	and life. Relatives burn python fat.	fast-tracked by burning python fat.	
Certifying death (<i>Kutarira kuti munhu afa here</i>)	Making sure that death has occurred by checking certain things.	To prevent the burial of a live person.	It is still performed.

4.6 THEME 2: PRE-BURIAL RITUALS IN DETAIL

As was explained in chapter 3, pre-burial rituals refer to the rites that are performed before death occurs, when the proximity of death is anticipated. At this point, the family of the terminally ill person anticipates death at any time. Sometimes, the rituals are requested by the sick person if he can still talk. The rituals may be performed by the family members and other villagers for the ill person. In this fieldwork, this researcher was told of numerous pre-burial rituals that are either frequently or infrequently performed by the Karanga of Nyajena. These are: *bembera*, divination (*gumbwa*), relocation of the terminally ill person to some other place outside the home (*kusengudza*), accompaniment or watching of the ill person (*kurindira*), visitation of the ill person (*kuvona mugwere*), burning of python fat, and the certification of death. It should be noted that some of these rituals are still performed by the Karanga, while others have been replaced by Christian rituals, or have just faded away as shall be discussed under cultural changes. The same rituals may be performed for a sick person, who is not in any danger of death.

4.6.1 Sub-Theme: *Kutema Bembera*

When a family member becomes seriously ill, and the relatives have tried all medication to no avail, there are two related rituals that can be performed. The first one is called *kutema bembera*,

which refers to the revelation of the fact that the witch who is causing the illness is known, and is encouraged, or sometimes threatened to give the ill person an antidote. This phenomenon of trying to get the witch to withdraw the wizardry is also reported by Crawford among the Shona of Mwenezi, (1967: 267).

The ritual involves the family of the ill person secretly consulting a diviner or more than one diviner to identify the causes of the illness. If they are told that witchcraft is involved, and at times, the name of the witch, they do not just approach the witch. With the assistance of the village head, all the adult villagers are supposed to gather at the village meeting place where the village head and the head of the family of the ill person tell the villagers that they know the witch, and they give him an opportunity to reverse the effects of the witchcraft. Sometimes, a time frame for the reversal of the effects of witchcraft is offered by the family head of the ill person. Usually, a threat is made to the effect that if the ill person is not healed, the name of the witch would be revealed, or the effects of witchcraft could be sent back to the sender. My participants informed me that *kutema bembera* had yielded positive results on numerous occasions. Once witches know that their identities are known, and can be revealed, they are likely to give the ill person some witchcraft antidote. In one of the villages, there had been a in the past month *bembera*, but unfortunately, the ill person had died soon afterwards. According to Linda, the patient might have died because they had performed *bembera* too late, and the witch failed to reverse the effects of witchcraft.

4.6.2 Sub-Theme: *Gumbwa*

Gumbwa is connected to the *bembera* ritual. If the illness becomes more serious, even after the official threat to reveal the names of the witches, the leader of the family of the patient may request the village head to send all the adult villagers to a diviner to find out the causes of the illness. The Karanga of Nyajena refer to this as *gumbwa*. Normally, the family of the ill person would have already consulted a diviner secretly, and would have been told who the witch is. The public consultation of a diviner is intended to have the witch identified in her presence, and then asked to reverse the effects of witchcraft.

Usually, several diviners are consulted, and these should live in faraway places to prevent them from relying on their prior knowledge of people who are consulting them. The participants in this study told me that this consultation of the diviner (*gumbwa*) by the adult villagers is still practiced by some Karanga people. Be that as it may, some interviewees mentioned some villagers who had refused to take part in such a ritual citing their allegiance to Christianity. Usually, there is nothing that the village head can directly do to punish villagers who refuse to go for *gumbwa*. However, Thomas emphasized that refusing to go for *gumbwa* is tantamount to confessing to being a witch. “If you have nothing to hide, you should not refuse to go for *gumbwa*,” said Thomas.

4.6.3 Sub-Theme: *Kusengudza*

The ritual of *kusengudza* is also practiced by the Karanga of Nyajena although it has changed. *Kusengudza* refers to the temporary relocation of the seriously ill person to the home of a relative or a traditional healer. According to the interviewees and some observations made, there are

three reasons for relocating the ill person. First, it is done to remove her from the neighborhood of the witches who may have caused her illness. This relocation may also remove the patient from harmful objects and spells that may be in her normal home. Although witches can ply their business in faraway places, they may not be able to enter the new home easily. Crawford (1967: 265) seems to support the idea of *kusengudza*, by asserting that relocation (*kutama*) of the whole family placed the victims beyond the reach of witches. Evans-Pritchard (1976: 47), who did his research among the Azande of South Sudan confirms that witches mainly harm people who live in the proximity, which he interprets as a sign that they do not have much power over people who live away from them.

Secondly, it gives the ill person fresh air and a new environment, which may be conducive for her recuperation. Thirdly, the relocation home may be closer to the traditional healer or may be the home of the healer. In this case, the relatives would avoid the wear and tear involved in transporting a patient to and from the traditional healer. However, Bourdillon (1987: 199), who studied the Shona in general, claims that *kusengudza* is performed to remove the patient from the noise of the children, a view which was not mentioned by any of the participants in this study. As shall be discussed below, this ritual has significantly changed. Instead of relocating the ill person to a relative or a healer's home, patients are now shuttled between homes and hospitals.

4.6.4 Sub-Theme: Visiting the Dying Person

The other important ritual, which the Karanga of Nyajena practice is the visiting of the ill person. When illness persists and becomes more serious, all the relatives of the patient are expected to visit him. The visit may be long or short depending on the nature of the relationship between the

visitor and the patient. In the rural areas, all the villagers are also expected to visit the ill person even if they are not quite related to him. There is not much that they are expected to do except asking the patient how he or she is feeling. They also listen to whatever he or she says. If the visitor is a family member, she may also assist in the care of the ill person if necessary. This ritual is still very popular. Agatha and Thomas reported that it may be unforgivable to fail to visit a fellow villager who is sick. The visits may be as frequent as once per week or even more if the sick person lives in the same area. Michael alleged that those relatives or villages who do not visit the sick person are likely to be witches. However, he mentioned that sometimes, the dying person may openly refuse to be visited by a particular person, if he is still able to do so. Alternatively, he may instruct his relatives not to allow a particular person to visit him. This refusal to be visited does not necessarily mean that the person is a witch because it may be out of their old grudges.

4.6.5 Sub-Theme: Watching the Dying Person

Watching (*kurinda*) the seriously ill person is one of the most important pre-burial rituals. When the relatives feel that the ill person is in the process of dying, he should never be left alone. A close relative should watch over the sick person. There are several reasons for this constant watching of the dying person by the Karanga of Nyajena. First, the watcher takes care of the needs of the ill person. These needs include feeding, medication, cleaning, and sometimes just being present to accompany the dying person. This accompaniment shows the love the family has for the person. Second, the watchperson also receives and hosts the relatives or villagers who visit the ill person. It is also part of her responsibilities to explain the nature and severity of the illness to the visitors. Third, a dying person should not be allowed to die alone. A close relative

should watch for signs of dying so that other rituals such as the folding of hands and legs, closing of mouth and eyes can be performed before the body becomes rigid. Fourth, most dying people are afraid of dying. Writing from the Western point of view, Backer, Hannon, and Russell (1994: 27–28) assert that dying persons fear extinction, loss of things that they enjoy in life, the unknown, isolation and separation, leaving dependents without a breadwinner, and so on. It is the responsibility of the watchperson to accompany, comfort, and help the dying to reframe their understanding of their impending demise. Fifth, the watchperson should notify others of the occurrence of death by wailing or just letting others know. This notification is crucial because funeral notifications and arrangements should begin as soon as death occurs to enable relatives living faraway to attend the funeral.

Sarah, Michael, and Linda mentioned a very strange ritual that may be performed if a dying person lingers on for a long time, and there is no hope of him recovering from the illness. In such a case, the ritual of burning python fat may be performed. The belief is that since a python does not die fast, anybody who would have touched its body during his active life, would also die slowly. So, the relatives of the patient may find some python fat, which they burn while the patient is inhaling the smoke. It is believed that if the slow, agonizing death is caused by having handled a python, the ritual of burning some python fat would fast-track the dying process thereby preventing the patient from enduring a long, painful death. Last, the family elders or watchperson should be able to certify that the ill person has actually died. The participants mentioned several signs of the approaching of death, such as loss of sensations, arms and legs becoming cold, no breathing, no heartbeat, eyelids and mouth opening involuntarily, and eyes being fixed in a certain position.

4.6.6 Category: Cultural Changes in Pre-Burial Rituals

Many of the pre-burial rituals have changed. Although *bembera* and *gumbwa* are still done, it has become illegal to name the witches because of the Witchcraft Suppression Act, which criminalizes the claim to be able to identify or accuse anyone of witchcraft. Even though the relatives of the ill person still consult diviners, and may perform *bembera*, no names are mentioned. However, some cases were reported in which some diviners are said to have openly named the witches, and were arrested only to be released after being reprimanded by the law enforcement agents. In addition to that, some villagers refuse to be involved in the distant consultation of a diviner (*gumbwa*) citing their belief in Christianity. Another change involves the consultation of faith healers or “prophets” instead of diviners, which was reported to have become fashionable in Nyajena. Although faith healers are also bound by the Witchcraft Suppression Act, they are favored because they are Christians, and purport to use Christian healing methods. This popularity of faith healers seems to be the fruit of a colonial mindset, which makes some Karanga to think that anything that purports to be Christian or Western is qualitatively superior to anything African.

It was also reported that the *kusengudza* ritual had significantly changed. Before the coming of urbanization in Zimbabwe, the Karanga had only one home—the rural home. So, the patient would either be taken to a traditional healer or a relative’s home for *kusengudza*. At times, they would build a makeshift hut for the dying person outside the home. But with the colonization of Zimbabwe by the British South Africa Company in 1890, and the beginning of industrialization and urbanization in Zimbabwe, the Karanga, like any other Shona people, started migrating to

towns and mining or farming compounds where some bought or rented houses. In some circumstances, their employers provided accommodation near their working places.

Before Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, animal husbandry was a big thing in Nyajena. There were two large commercial animal ranges closer to Nyajena, namely, Makosi River Range (owned by Anglo-American Corporation) and Chivoko Range. There was also Renco Mine, which at its peak employed more than a thousand workers. There were also Triangle, Mukwasine, and Chiredzi Estates, which produced sugarcane and cotton. Most people who got employed in these places maintained their rural homes where the rest of their families lived but would have a new home in towns, and on the farms or mining compounds. In some cases, the dualization of homes was necessitated by the fact that some mining compounds did not allow women to be residents. This phenomenon brought some changes to the *kusengudza* ritual. Instead of taking the dying person to a relative's home, now, some Karanga people take him either to his rural or town home, depending on where he is living at the period of his sickness. Also, very ill persons are taken to hospitals, and this cultural change shall be discussed in detail under burial rituals.

The participants reported that the ritual of visiting the ill person is still significant in Nyajena. However, since many people die at the hospital, it has become increasingly difficult for the relatives to visit the ill person. There are some reasons for this. First, the hospital might be far away from the homes of some of the relatives. Second, hospitals have regulations concerning the visiting of patients. All the participants noted that the number of visitors at the hospital is limited, and visiting times are sometimes limited to two, one-hour visits per day. This stipulation has

made it almost impossible for a family watchperson to accompany a dying relative constantly.

The people dying at the hospital may die alone or in the company of strangers. This change will be explored in detail under burial rituals.

There have been questions concerning the existence of witchcraft itself. Some of the participants argued that although witchcraft existed, there were, in some cases, false witchcraft accusations. Sometimes, people accused their enemies of witchcraft, and these accusations are at times, mutual. This view confirms what Shorter (1973: 141) observed in East Africa concerning witchcraft accusations occurring in communities where there were tensions and conflicts, and usually between equals, such as co-wives, neighbors, rival suitors, and so on. Hence, it seems that the Karanga of Nyajena no longer quite believe that all reported witchcraft cases, are true. Witchcraft accusations have to be taken with a pinch of salt. This perspective is different from the past, where once a person was accused of witchcraft, and confirmed by the word of a diviner, then she would be deemed a *bona fide* witch.

4.7 THEME 3: BURIAL RITUALS

The participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Describe the Karanga burial rituals, from the time the body is carried out from the house for burial until it is finally laid to rest;
2. What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?; and,
3. Has any of these rituals changed?

It should be noted that although all the themes recorded in the table below came from the interviews, the subsequent detailed narrative is a result of the data and explanations provided by the participants and the observations and patterns drawn by this researcher.

TABLE 4.4

SUB-THEME (RITUALS)	CATEGORY (PRAXIS)	CATEGORY (SIGNIFICANCE)	CATEGORY (CHANGES)
Folding of hands and legs (<i>Kupeta mavoko nemakumbo</i>)	Hands are placed on the chest or sides of the corpse. In the past, legs would also be folded.	1. For the corpse to resemble the unborn baby in the womb. 2. To make the body shorter/smaller for burial.	1. Most people are buried in coffins. 2. Legs are no longer folded.
Closing of eyes and mouth (<i>Kuvhara maziso nemuromo</i>)	Eyes and mouth should be closed before the onset of rigor <i>mortis</i> .	1. For the corpse to look normal. 2. So that soil may not enter. 3. To avoid frightening the mourners.	1. These rituals are still performed. 2. Sometimes done at the hospital or mortuaries.
Wailing (<i>Kuhungudza</i>)	As soon as the person is certified dead, the person(s) keeping watch wails. Most women who attend the funeral should wail upon arrival.	1. To notify others of the occurrence of death. 2. To express grief. 3. It is culturally expected.	Nothing has changed.
Announcement of death (<i>Kuzivisa vanhu</i>)	Three methods were used: 1. Wailing, for those in the neighborhood. 2. Sending emissaries or letters to those living far away. 3. Drumming.	1. Notification of death. 2. Summoning people to come over to the home of the deceased.	In addition to wailing and emissaries, telephones, emails, national broadcasts, social media are used.

Death token (<i>Chema</i>)	People give a token to the family of the deceased. This could be money, food, vegetables, and so on.	1. To assist in the burial of the deceased. 2. To show a spirit of togetherness.	1. <i>Chema</i> is still being offered. 2. Some families do have funeral policies that assist during burial.
Washing of corpse (<i>Kugezesa mufi</i>)	A wet towel may be used to wipe certain parts of the body, such as mouth, eyes, arm pits, back, and so on.	1. To remove any kind of dirty. 2. To prepare the deceased to meet the ancestors. 3. To make the dead body presentable.	1. This may be done at the mortuary for people who die at the hospital or in towns. 2. Embalming may also be done.
Dressing (<i>Kupfekedza mufi</i>)	The corpse is dressed in clean clothes. In the past the body was wrapped in animal hide, and later, in white cloth.	1. To prepare for the journey into the land of the dead. 2. To make it presentable.	If the person was a Christian, a church gown/attire may be used.
Body viewing (<i>Kuvona mufi</i>)	This is done as soon as the corpse is taken outside the house, on its way for burial.	This is done: 1. To allow relatives to bid farewell to the deceased. 2. To bring closure to the family.	Nowadays people may take pictures or videos during this time.
Resting the body (<i>Kuzorodza mufi</i>)	The body/coffin being carried to the grave is placed on the ground about three times.	This is done to: 1. Rest the spirit of the deceased. 2. Rest those bearing the coffin/ <i>bwanyanza</i> . 3. Allow relatives to give their last respect.	This is still done for people buried in rural areas. Major changes: 1. Vehicles may be used both in rural areas and in towns. 2. Most people are buried in coffins.
Marking the grave (<i>Kutara guva</i>)	A close relative (father or brother) of the deceased uses a hoe or pick to mark the grave while saying a few words.	1. Just like in life, a house is presented to a son by a close relative (father). 2. To appease the spirit of the dead.	This is still respected in the rural areas. However, in towns there are pre-dug graves. These are neither marked nor dug by the relatives of the deceased.
Time of burial	It is not allowed to bury the deceased during midday. If this	1. It is believed that no one is born or dies at midday.	Nowadays the tabooed times are

	is violated, the perpetrators must pay a fine to the chief.	2. Midday is the resting time for ancestors.	between 12 noon and 1:00 pm.
Speeches/Eulogies (<i>Kubwereketa</i>)	Speeches may start at home, and end at the burial site. Only close relatives of the departed are asked to give these speeches.	1. They are farewell speeches. 2. They bring closure to the family members. 3. They chronicle the works of the departed.	Nowadays, pastors may also give eulogies.
Lowering the body (<i>Kuradzika chitunha</i>)	Carrying the body and placing it in the grave are the responsibilities of the sons-in-laws and nephews (<i>vazukuru</i>). Women are not allowed to do it.	1. The coffin is too heavy for women. 2. These are the normal people who do the heavy-duty jobs for their fathers-in-law. 3. Fear of misfortunes.	In towns or where there is a funeral policy, the coffin is lowered into the grave using mechanized equipment.
Those not allowed to attend burials	1. Pregnant women. 2. Children. 3. Wife/husband of the deceased. 4. Twin brother/sister at the other twin's burial.	To prevent them from becoming sick, blind, or die.	Nowadays children are allowed to attend funerals. But at the end of burial, they have to stand with their backs to the grave to prevent misfortunes.
Direction the corpse faces in the grave, and side on which the corpse should lie in the grave (<i>Divi rinotarira chitunha uye rachinoradzikwa naro</i>)	The side is determined by the deceased's: 1. Totem or clan. 2. Gender. However, generally, men should be buried lying on their left-hand side, and women on their right-hand side.	1. That is the direction from which the deceased's ancestors would come. 2. Those are the normal sides men and women use when having sex.	In the coffin, the corpse faces upwards.
Putting soil (<i>Kukanda ivhu</i>)	This ritual is for those who would not have assisted in the digging of the grave. It is also done for those close relatives	1. To show their solidarity and contribution in the work done. 2. To prevent those absent from	It is still performed. However, Christians have Christianized it.

	who are not present during the burial.	misfortunes caused by the spirit of the dead.	
Stones (<i>matombo</i>)	After the grave has been covered with soil, stones are then lined on top of the soil. A bigger or tall stone is planted on the side of the head. Mourners are not allowed to pick two stones at the same time.	1. To prevent animals from digging or spreading the soil on the grave. 2. One stone should be picked one at a time to prevent the spirit from killing two people at a time, if aggrieved.	Still done in rural areas. May not be done if the grave would be plastered with cement, or if burial happens in a town cemetery.
Sweeping the burial area (<i>Kutsvaira pabwiro</i>)	When the burial is done, before mourners leave for home, the area around the grave is swept, and water is sprinkled.	1. To be able to detect if the witches would have desecrated the grave during the night.	Still performed in the rural areas, but not in towns.
Mutarara	A branch of <i>mutarara</i> may be placed on top of the grave after burial.	1. To prevent animals from disturbing the deceased. 2. It is a symbol of goodbye, particularly when relationships were strained. 3. To invoke the spirit of the dead to become an avenging spirit.	Very few people do it nowadays.
Burial of a fetus and babies (<i>Kuviga gavamwedzi kana mwana muduku</i>)	Children who die before cutting teeth, and fetuses are buried in the riverbed. Should face upwards. Buried by old women. Mother not allowed to attend. No mourning rituals.	1. Facing upwards is done to prevent the mother from becoming barren. 2. Burial in riverbed is intended to cool the spirit of the child. 3. Mourning rituals are not done to prevent the kid from coming back or causing the deaths of subsequent kids.	It is still done for kids dying in the rural area. Since most women give birth at hospitals, the fetus may be burnt.

Burial of a pregnant woman (<i>Kuviga mukadzi ane mimba</i>)	Should be buried in a swamp area. If the pregnancy is about four months old, the fetus should be removed from the womb.	This is done to avoid drought and other misfortunes.	Nowadays, this may not be followed.
Burial of an unmarried person (<i>Kuviga munhu asina kuwana</i>)	In the past, these were buried with a rat inserted in their backs, or with a mortar and pestle, and so on.	1. This rat represents the deceased's wife or husband. 2. It is a symbol that the deceased should not come back as an ancestor.	This is rarely done nowadays.
Burial by proxy (<i>Kuviga munhu asipo</i>)	The soil may be taken from the urban grave, and buried at the rural home. If the burial place is not known, the remains of a goat may be buried.	A person should be buried where his ancestors are buried (rural home).	Nowadays, people may ignore this ritual.
Shadow (<i>Bvuri</i>)	It is believed that a dead person has no shadow. However, if the person who would have caused the death enters the room where the corpse is, a shadow may appear. Daughter-in-law may be asked to reprimand the dead. Or the perpetrator may pay a fine.	1. The deceased is still present and sees what is happening. 2. Justice is important. 3. The daughter-in-law, though an outsider in her husband's family, is considered a ritual practitioner.	The appearance of a shadow has been reported at some funerals.
Death of a chief	Is kept secret for a long time. Buried in a cave. The mourning or resting days may last for a month.	1. A chief is a ritual practitioner. 2. Becomes a senior ancestor after death.	1. May not be buried in a cave. 2. People may know of the death earlier than used to be.

4.8 THEME 3: BURIAL RITUALS IN DETAIL

The Karanga of Nyajena have numerous rituals, which are performed from the moment the ill person is pronounced or certified dead, and the time the corpse is carried to the grave for burial. These rituals, by far, outnumber the pre-burial and post-burial rituals. During my fieldwork, there was much agreement concerning the rituals that should be carried out, and the things that should be avoided in performing these rituals. These solemn rituals include: the folding of hands and legs, closing of eyes and mouth, wailing, announcing death, payment of the death token, washing and dressing of the corpse, body viewing, resting the body on the way to the grave, the forbidden time of burial, farewell speeches, lowering the body into the grave, the people who are not allowed to attend the burial, the direction faced by the corpse, putting soil and stones onto the grave, the sweeping of the grave area after burial, and placing *mutarara* branch on the grave.

In addition to general rites, the Karanga have special rites for the burial of certain people. For instance, the participants described the rituals involving the burial of a fetus or a pregnant woman, and an unmarried woman or man. These members of the society demand special burial rituals. Although burial by proxy is no longer as widespread as it might have been in the past, it is still practiced. The phenomenon of the shadow of the deceased, and rituals surrounding it were mentioned by all the participants. It should be noted that, even though all the interviewees mentioned these rituals, they differed in the significance that they accorded to them. Some of the rituals may have been abandoned as shall be explored under cultural changes. As has been

observed by Goody (1962: 34), death rituals in some way, control grief by providing a standardized way of grieving.

4.8.1 Sub-Theme: Folding Hands and Legs

As has already been mentioned, the dying person should never be left alone. There should be always an adult to watch and care for him. Among the Karanga, the appropriate person for this sacred responsibility is a close relative of the dying person. If it is a man, his son, wife, or brother should shoulder this duty. However, where only daughters are available, one of them or more can take over this responsibility. If the person on the deathbed is a woman, one of her daughters, sisters, or even mother, can take this responsibility. This watching should be constant if the ill persons are displaying signs of the approaching of death. These signs are similar everywhere. Sankar (1991: 150–151) has listed ten signs of the immanence of death: the loss of sensation, motion, and reflexes, legs and arms becoming cool, more time spent sleeping, confusion about time and place, sight failure, loss of bowel and urine control, increase in oral secretions, restlessness, acute loss of appetite, and irregular breathing accompanied with a rattle in the throat and periods of no breathing. Even though death can come like a thief, under normal circumstances, its arrival can be predicted to a large extent.

Once death has occurred, the first ritual to be performed is the folding of hands and legs of the departed. This may be performed by the watcher or any other relatives who is present at home during the occurrence of death. Most of my respondents told me that the Karanga have ways of certifying death. If breathing has completely ceased, the heartbeat has stopped, the eyelids are rigidly open, the jaws are relaxed, the arms and legs stretched, and eyes staying fixed, then death

is likely to have occurred. At this point, the watcher or any of the adult relatives at home immediately folds the legs and arms of the deceased. According to Maria, the arms and hands may be placed on the side of the body. The legs are folded to have the knees face the direction of the face. This ritual should be performed before the corpse becomes rigid. However, if the dead person is going to be buried in a coffin, the hands may be placed on the sides of the body or folded and placed on the chest. The legs are not folded, but just placed close to each other if they would have spread during death.

This ritual is very significant. First, the body is folded to resemble the position and shape of the baby while it is still in its mother's womb. Death is seen as the beginning of a new life in the ancestral world. The folded position is full of potency. The grave will be the new womb in which the deceased will live until he becomes an ancestor. This rebirth is facilitated by the making of an ancestor (*magadziro*) ritual that will be discussed under post-burial rituals. Second, in the past, people were not buried in coffins. The folding of the hands and legs was intended to minimize the size of the grave to aid the gravediggers. Third, this bending of legs and arms is done to incapacitate the deceased in case he wanted to fight his family members as an offended spirit. "A man with folded hands and legs cannot run or fight," said Jack.

4.8.2 Sub-Theme: Closing of Eyes and Mouth

The closing of the eyes and mouth is performed simultaneously with the folding of the arms and legs. The closing of the eyes and mouth may take several attempts until they permanently close. Michael reported of a deceased relative whose mouth kept opening until burial. Sometimes, a person dies in the absence of the watcher or at night, and the occurrence of death is discovered

long after rigor *mortis*. If the body is already stiff, the participants in this study said that warm water and a towel may be used to relax the muscles so that they may be flexible. If the warm water does not help, a scarf or piece of cloth may be tied around the head and below the chin of the departed in order to close the mouth. If the eyelids keep opening, warm water may be used to relax them. Linda and a few other people interviewed said that a coin may be placed for a while on the closed eyelids to keep the eyes closed. This coin should not be too heavy because it may force the eyeballs down into the sockets.

Most of the participants did not know the significance of this ritual. A few of them asserted that the ritual is intended to prevent soil from getting into the eyes and mouth of the dead person. In addition, since death is seen as a long sleep, the eyes and mouth should be closed as in normal sleep. One of the interviewees Linda and Matthew claimed that this ritual is performed to prevent the corpse from scaring the mourners.

4.8.3 Sub-Theme: Wailing

As soon as death has been ascertained by the senior relative present during its occurrence, wailing may begin. Normally women are expected to cry out loudly, and at times, saying some consolatory words concerning their loss, or accusing the witches who would be suspected of having caused the death. Men are expected to cry silently, or not to shed any tears at all. According to Judas, men should be brave and courageous, and crying does not paint a good picture.

Most participants concurred that wailing has three functions among the Karanga of Nyajena. First, it serves to notify neighbors of the occurrence of death. In the rural areas, all villagers would have known of the seriousness of the illness, and in most cases, anticipating the final demise of the ill person. Most, if not all villagers, would have visited the dying person once or more times during the course of his illness. So, once the neighbors hear the wailing from the home of the ill person, they quickly rush over there. As they arrive at the threshold of the home of the deceased, women may also join in the wailing, at times throwing themselves about, and saying words of anguish or accusation. Sometimes, the deceased himself is blamed for having run away from his family. "Why have you run away from us?" Also, the remaining spouse may be asked, "What have you done to her or him?"

Second, the wailing, questioning, anger, and desperation when death occurs are normal stages of grief and dealing with it as Pine (1974: 37) has noted. It is believed that wailing is therapeutic. The Karanga also believe that the tears wash away anguish and anger. Third, Harry claimed that the amount of wailing signifies the amount of love the mourners had for the deceased. However, Maria begged to differ by arguing that some mourners wail at the top of their voices even if they did not like the deceased. Of course, close relatives are expected to cry more and louder. Also, if the death was unexpected, the wailing is louder to signify the shock being experienced by the mourners. If a bad or very old person dies, although wailing is still expected, it may not be as loud as for a relatively younger person.

4.8.4 Sub-Theme: Announcing Death

One of the rituals associated with the announcement of death is the wailing that has been discussed above. Since this wailing is only intended for the neighbors, in the past, there were other methods used to notify people of the occurrence of death. Emissaries were and are supposed to be sent to those relatives living in distant places. Most of the participants concurred that it is important that the emissary be an adult who knows a thing or two about making death announcements. If the departed has not been seriously ill, or if the relatives have not been aware of his illness, they need to be prepared for the horrible news. According to the participants in this study, the announcer does not just tell them of the demise of their relative. He may start by notifying them of the seriousness of the illness. He may also mention that the ill person may not make it. And when he feels that the one being notified is ready for the bad news, he should tell him about the death.

However, it should be noted that it is the responsibility of everyone who has been made aware of someone's death to pass the sad news on. So, those people travelling to other places after a death has occurred are expected to propagate the news. Everyone should know about it as soon as possible. One of the significances of this quick spread of the news is to prevent people from encountering misfortunes (*mashura*) associated with not being aware of the death of their relative.

Whenever possible, the announcement of death should be made slowly and carefully. This stage-by-stage announcement of death is done to lessen the effects of shock on the one being told. According to Praagh (2000: 12–13), the shock may include total disbelief of the sad news,

paralysis, and numbness. To avoid hurting the one being told about the death, it is encouraged to first make him sit down, and prepare him for the bad news. If a woman dies, and her own relatives have to be notified, a token of the notice of the death may be paid. Of course, transport costs may be covered by the son-in-law if the relatives of the deceased woman live far away from the place of the burial.

Letters and telephones could also be used to announce the occurrence of death to family members who live away from home. Again, the process of notification in stages should be followed to avoid shocking the one being notified. This change has been made necessary by the migration of people to other places, far away from their family homes. In addition to letters and telephones, people's deaths may be announced on radios and televisions.

In all these forms of announcements, euphemisms about death are used instead of direct language. Ordinarily, the one announcing death is not expected to say, "X has died." For instance, the Karanga may use, "*atisiya*" (she has left us), "*ashaika*" (she has disappeared), "*hakuchina*" (she is no longer there), "*atungamira*" (she has gone before us), *azorora* (she has rested) and many other death euphemisms. These euphemisms are intended to dignify the process of dying. They also give light to what the Karanga believe death to be. The dead is now invisible and has gone to the realm of the ancestors. *Atungamira* alludes to the acceptance of death, and the awareness that all human beings will follow. The dead has just gone before us, but we will all follow. What I observed from the interviews is that death notices are delicate and should be announced with utmost respect to the deceased, while taking all precautions that the

living relatives being told of the death are psychologically prepared to receive the devastating news.

4.8.5 Sub-Theme: Death Token

Mourners are expected to contribute some money or food or both to the bereaved family as a death token (*chema*). Gelfand (1959: 185) refers to *chema*, as “death present.” The bereaved family appoints one of the family members, particularly one who is literate and trustworthy to receive and record the mourners’ monetary contributions. Sometimes mourners offer food in addition to money. Usually, neighbors bring maize meal and vegetables, and these are received and documented by the women in charge of the provision of food to the mourners. In addition to money and food, men may assist with the fetching of firewood and water that will be used throughout the funeral. In some Nyajena villages such as Machimbira and Mavuka, they do have standing committees whose treasurers receive burial contributions on a monthly basis, in order to assist bereaved families in times of death. *Chema* is expected from all people who come to perform the ritual of commiserating with the bereaved (*kubata mavoko*), even if they arrive long after the burial.

The contribution of *chema* is a symbol of the Karanga *unhu* (good behavior), which compels villagers to unite and assist each other in times of need. Death is believed to be a blow to everyone in the community. Sometimes, the bereaved may not have enough food to feed the mourners so, they need assistance. The money contributed is also a symbol of farewell to the deceased. In real life, people would have exchanged many gifts, and *chema* is the final gift to the departed. Furthermore, *chema* is a symbol of loss and sorrow for having lost a human being. It is

a token of mourning. Sarah emphasized the point that if one wishes others to assist in the event of a death in the family, one must also be willing to assist others in times of their need. For her, *chema* is like an insurance policy from which bereaved families are likely to get assistance in times of need.

4.8.6 Sub-Theme: Marking the Grave

The marking of the deceased's final resting place is one of the most significant rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena. If the father of the deceased person is available, he should perform the ritual of *kutara guva*. However, if the father of the deceased is not available any other close relative may perform the ritual. A married woman's grave should be marked by her own relatives. The husband and her own children are not authorized to mark her grave.

The Karanga of Nyajena perform the grave marking ritual early in the morning. The authorized person uses a hoe or pick to mark the boundaries of the grave, or may dig the place where the grave should be dug for about three times, while saying a short prayer, such as, "this is the place we are making you a home." This symbolic digging resembles the modern-day groundbreaking rituals. Where a close relative is not available, a person of the same totem may be authorized to mark the grave. Also, in cases, where adult relatives are not available, a young child of the deceased, under the guidance of an adult, may perform the ritual. Women, too, may perform the ritual if all male relatives are unavailable. Maria, one of the participants in this study said that she performed the ritual when her brother's daughter died because she was the only available close relative of the deceased.

The people of Nyajena believe that if the ritual is not performed by an authorized person, the grave may be difficult to dig. It is claimed that the diggers may encounter rocks, or water, or any other hurdles. The Karanga also believe that in real life, a person is given a home by his father. So, the same should be followed in death. If the deceased were a married woman whose husband would not have paid bridewealth, her relatives may postpone the ritual until the bridewealth arrears have been paid. If the relatives of the deceased woman refuse to mark the grave, the spirit of the deceased woman may come back as an avenging spirit to haunt her husband's family. Since most people fear the avenging spirit, members of the bereaved man's family pool up resources to pay up the remaining bridewealth. This pooling up of resources shows that a woman is married to the whole family, not just her husband. Hence, if her spirit becomes an avenging spirit, it attacks the extended family indiscriminately.

4.8.7 Sub-Theme: Washing and Dressing of the Corpse

The washing of the dead body is one of the most significant death rituals among most Africans. This ritual is performed before the corpse is presented for viewing, and the subsequent burial. The most common practice is to wash it as soon as possible before the arrival of mourners. The Karanga use a bucket or dish with warm water in which a towel is dipped. In the past, *gambe* (large piece of broken clay pot) was used. The wet towel with soap is then used to clean different parts of the body such as the face, nostrils, mouth, armpits, private parts, back, and neck. The ritual is performed by a close relative of the deceased.

Ordinarily a woman's body is washed by women, and a man's, by men. The ritual washing can also be performed by nephews (*vazukuru*). The dish, soap, and towel used may be taken for

personal use by the person who would have washed the corpse. Some participants said that the dish and towel may be given to the mother of the deceased. Other participants maintained that the dish, soap, towel, and remaining dirty water may be placed in the grave during burial. The water is particularly important because if it gets into the hands of evil people or witches, they may use it to prevent the deceased from becoming an avenging spirit if the person died aggrieved. Once the washing is done, some body lotion such as Vaseline may be applied to the body. Finally, the corpse is dressed. In the distant past, animal hide would be used to wrap the body. After cloths were introduced by foreign traders such as the Arabs and Portuguese, some white cloth was used to wrap the body. Nowadays, the corpse may be dressed in the deceased's best clothes, or even some church attire, as shall be discussed under cultural changes.

Most of the participants reported that during the dying process, a person may lose bowel and urine control. Consequently, if there is anything in the colon or bladder, the dying person may soil himself involuntarily. Hence, there is always a need to wash the corpse as soon as possible. The washing of the body is believed to symbolize the cleanliness that is required by the ancestors. If the deceased is dirty, he may not be received in the ancestral realm. Also, this washing of the dead body symbolizes the spiritual rebirth. At birth, a child is birthed before it can meet the general members of the family. Likewise, the departed must be washed and be presentable in order to meet the ancestors. The dead is on a journey to a new home, and he should be dressed in a presentable way to avoid embarrassing his ancestors during reception in the ancestral realm. If the body is unclean, the spirit of the dead may come back to haunt his family members. In addition to that, James contended that washing the corpse is believed to cool the dead person's anger, lest he attacks his living relatives.

4.8.8 Sub-Theme: Body Viewing

When the body is ready for burial, and all the burial preparations have been done, it is brought outside the house and placed closer to the door in which the mourning was performed. In the past, a funeral carrier made of tree bark and two poles (*bwanyanza*) was used to transport the body to the grave. During burial, the stretcher or mat is destroyed and placed in the grave, but only after the body or coffin is completely covered with the soil. Nowadays, a coffin or just a reed mat may be used. Once the body is placed outside the house, the family ritual leader then invites the mourners to come by to view the deceased. This ritual is for all mourners who do not have a nervous disposition that may prevent them from performing it. As mourners pass through the head side of the deceased, they may momentarily stop, bow, and say a few words silently. In the past, body viewing was only for adults. Also, children and pregnant women were not allowed to view the body or even to attend the burial because it would pose some danger to their health.

Body viewing is intended to allow the mourners to bid farewell to the deceased. Maria contended that the final goodbye resembled what the same people would have done—coming to see the newly born baby. At this point, the viewers may say a few words to the deceased who is believed to be around in the form of a spirit. It gives them an opportunity to ask for forgiveness if they would have wronged the deceased during his lifetime. More so, body viewing brings about closure to the mourners, and helps them to overcome grief. Here, the mourners' doubts, fears, and disbelief about the death are either debunked or confirmed depending on their state. They realize that death has occurred, and the deceased is gone for good, at least, physically.

4.8.9 Sub-Theme: Resting the Body on the Way to the Grave

After body viewing, the body is carried around the house or kitchen in which it was kept, and then taken to the grave. The participants in this study did not agree if this ritual is still a general norm among the Karanga of Nyajena. As the body leaves the home on its way to the grave, the head of the departed should initially be on the side of the home, and should be on the direction of the grave after the second rest. The corpse should be placed on the ground for resting for about three times, and the third resting being at the grave. However, if the grave is situated away from home, the body bearers may rest for more than three times. The third or final resting is done at the grave, where body viewing may be done if not already performed at home. The ritual leader should tell the deceased that they are putting the carrier to the ground to rest him. The stretcher or coffin is carried by nephews or sons-in-law (*vakwambo*). However, any close relative and friend of the deceased may assist in the carrying of the body. The daughters-in-law (*varoora*) walk ahead of the body bearers, sometimes sweeping or clearing the path to the grave. If a woman has died, her husband's relatives should carry the body to the grave.

It is believed that going around the house is intended to confuse the spirit of the deceased if it decides to come back home before the *magadziro* ceremony. In addition to that, the resting ritual is intended to rest the spirit of the dead who is believed to be by the side of the corpse at this juncture. Since death is seen as a journey, one should be prepared and refreshed for it. It also shows that the relatives are reluctant to let go of the deceased as a sign of love. Furthermore, the ritual gives the mourners an opportunity to alert the ancestors of the arrival of the deceased.

4.8.10 Sub-Theme: Time of Burial and Eulogies

It should be noted that it is forbidden to bury the dead during midday in Nyajena, and any disregard of that taboo attracts a fine from Chief Nyajena. It is believed that disregarding that taboo angers the ancestors of the land, who may punish the whole community by withdrawing the rain, or allowing the people or animals to be struck by diseases. In the past, the elders of the family would check the position of the sun to determine the time of the day. Nowadays, in Nyajena, the tabooed burial time is between 12:00 noon and 1:00 pm. It is believed that ancestors are not active during that time. Hence, if someone is buried during the tabooed time, there may not be ancestors to receive the deceased in the ancestral realm. Hence, in Nyajena, the burial should be held before or after midday.

Just before burial, speeches eulogizing the deceased may be given. Only close relatives are given an opportunity to give these speeches about the deceased. The village head, even if not related to the deceased, is always allowed to give a speech, either at this time, or at the end of the burial.

Usually, he announces the sacred resting and mourning days in honor of the departed.

Sometimes, the family ritual leader may also invite the debtors owed anything by the dead to let him know what they are owed by the deceased. The speeches are a tribute to the dead, which chronicle his good deeds.

Occasionally, someone may say bad things about the dead, but the norm in Nyajena is to lavish praises on the dead person. Speeches concentrate on the positive side of the deceased as informed by the Karanga philosophy of *wafa wanaka* (the dead has become good). This philosophy is intended to persuade the living to make peace with the dead because he is no

longer present to either defend himself or make amends. Furthermore, *wafa wanaka* philosophy directs the mourners to take this time to think of the good things the deceased would have done. Ordinarily, people talk about the evil that other people do all the time, and sometimes, do not give a thought to the good that people do. The graveside eulogies are intended to give mourners an opportunity to think of the good that the dead would have done to the community or to individuals.

4.8.11 Sub-Theme: Placing the Body into the Grave

Once the speeches are done, the body may be lowered into the grave. Under normal circumstances, lowering the body into the grave is the responsibility of the sons-in-law and nephews of the deceased. If a coffin is used, and some mechanized equipment is available, it may be used to lower the coffin into the grave. The majority of the participants in this study reported having attended burials at which such mechanized equipment were used to lower coffins into the grave. In the coffin, the body should be laid on its back, with the face turned to the East. The East direction symbolizes the good things and the light, which come from the East. Other participants said that the body was to be laid on its side depending on the gender of the deceased. A woman should be laid on her right-hand side, and a man, on his left-hand side. If the husband and wife are buried in the same burial place, as is normal in the rural areas, their graves should be placed side by side. Again, the man's grave should be on the left-hand side, and the wife's grave on the right.

This is done to honor the normal side that different genders use during procreation. If the couple is being intimate in a side-by-side position, the man usually operates from the left-hand side of

the bed, and the woman from the right-hand side of the bed. According to Harry, even where a man favors to perform the 'sacred games' from the right-hand side of the bed, when the adult games are over, he is likely to go back to the left side to sleep. Furthermore, the side on which the body is placed in the grave is symbolic of the work that the departed will perform in the ancestral realm. The deceased would become an ancestor, and one of the significant duties of ancestors is to bring about the fertility of the land, animals, and human beings. So, the side on which he or she is laid is symbolic of the sexual act, in which the land, people, and animals receive fertility.

4.8.12 Sub-Theme: Putting Soil and Stones

When the body has been placed in the grave, the elderly relatives are requested to throw a little soil into the grave. This ritual is intended for the elderly who have not been active in the digging of the grave, and those relatives who are absent. As they throw the soil, they may say a little prayer. This ritual is required because every relative should manually assist in the burial of the departed. It also prevents misfortunes from happening to those relatives who are not present during the burial.

As soon as this ritual is done, the undertakers may quickly fill up the grave with soil. If the grave would be plastered with cement in the future, it is left with a heap of soil on it. However, the head side is marked with the erection of a head stone. If the family of the departed does not anticipate plastering the grave with cement in the future, it is covered with rocks. Both men and women assist each other in carrying the rocks to the grave. Once they reach the grave, a family member may line them on top of the soil mount that is already on the grave. However, each

person should carry strictly one rock at a time. In Nyajena, carrying two rocks, or plates, or any other tools used during burial at a time, is forbidden for three reasons, which all the participants mentioned. First, if the deceased were to come back as an avenging spirit, he would kill two people at a time. Second, in the event that the departed comes back to haunt his family, his spirit may team up with another spirit, and the consequences would be catastrophic. Third, if there is another family member who is sick, he or she may not survive the illness. So, to prevent such misfortunes from happening, only one stone, plate, or tool at a time, should be carried.

4.8.13 Sub-Theme: *Mutarara* Branch and Sweeping around the Grave

When the grave is completely covered with stones, a branch of *mutarara* tree (*gardenia Ternifolia*) may be placed on top of the grave. In cases where the grave is dug the day before burial (which should be avoided in Nyajena), the *mutarara* branch is also used to cover the grave opening. The people of Nyajena do this for four reasons. First, the ritual symbolizes that the physical life has ended, for the deceased has entered the spiritual realm. In the past, in Nyajena, the same branch could be placed on the threshold of a witch's house to communicate that she was no longer wanted in the village, and had to vacate her home. Second, it is intended to invoke the spirit of the deceased to rise as an avenging spirit to fight the people suspected of having caused his death. So, this branch may not be placed on the graves of people where foul play is not suspected. Third, the branch is intended to prevent wild animals from digging the grave or playing on it. Fourth, the Karanga do not use *mutarara* for firewood, and believe that it can chase away evil spirits. By placing it on the grave, they believe that it drives away evil spirits that may want to divert the spirit of the departed.

After the burial, when all the speeches have been done, the ritual leader of the family may sprinkle water on the dusty ground surrounding the grave. He does this while backing up to make sure that he does not step on the ground that has already been swept and sprinkled with water. This ritual is intended to allow the family to detect footsteps of witches or anyone who would have tried to desecrate the grave during the first night after burial, and also to cool the spirit of the buried person. The family of the deceased wakes up early in the morning to inspect the area for footsteps. They quickly consult a traditional diviner if they discover that the grave would have been desecrated.

4.8.14 Sub-Theme: Those not Allowed to Attend the Burial

It is important at this point to mention that in the past, young children and pregnant women were not allowed to attend a burial in Nyajena. In addition to them, one of the twin brothers or sisters was not allowed to attend the burial of the other twin. In his study of the Shona in general, Bullock (1927: 264) observes that children and women were not allowed to see the corpse leaving the hut, and the remaining spouse was not allowed to attend the burial of his or her spouse. There were two reasons for this sanction. It was believed that children and pregnant women could easily be affected by whatever would have caused the death. As for the twin brother or sister, it was believed that the evil spirits that would have caused the death of one twin, may mistake the surviving twin sibling for the dead, and would cause his death. This taboo was intended to protect the tabooed persons.

4.8.15 Burial of Fetus, Little Babies, and Pregnant Women

The Karanga of Nyajena give special attention to the burial of a fetus or a child that dies before cutting teeth. Both are buried in wetlands or along the riverbank. The wetland or river water is intended to cool the anger of the dead baby. If the baby is buried on dry land, it is believed that there would be a drought. Rayner (1962: 64) describes the death of a child who has not yet cut his first teeth as “abnormal, mysterious, and dangerous, particularly in the case of a woman who was having her first child.” In fact, Rayner contends that a child who had not cut his first teeth was not considered a human being, hence, the disposal of his remains was replete with danger, Rayner, (1962: 63–64).

In Nyajena, only women who have gone past child-bearing age are allowed to conduct the burial, because they are no longer capable of bearing babies. The mother and all men are not allowed to attend. If the mother attends the burial, or show any affection towards the dead child, she may not be able to conceive again. Men may help in the digging of the shallow grave but have to leave the actual burial to the elderly women. Normal mourning rituals such as *kukanda chibwe* or *kubata mavoko* are forbidden. Public commiserating with the bereaved parents is not allowed. If the deceased baby is a girl, she is laid on her right-hand side, and if a boy, on his left-hand side, symbolizing the normal sides women and men lay on during their intimacy. The burial should be performed early in the morning when it is still cool.

Likewise, a pregnant woman is also buried in a cool place to cool the spirit of the unborn fetus. In the past in Nyajena, if the pregnancy were advanced, say between seven and nine months, it was recommended to remove the baby from the mother’s womb and bury them side by side in

the same grave. Only one of the participants in this study claimed to have witnessed such a burial.

The cooling of the spirit of the deceased baby or pregnant mother is crucial because it is believed that dying so young would have deprived him of a full life. So, the spirit is deemed angry and dangerous. When the rain season comes, and the river is flooded, the remains of the baby are going to be washed away and transported into the oceans far away from where the baby's relatives live. This washing away of the remains of the baby signifies the washing away of the possible dangers that may harm the family or community.

If because of any reason, a little baby or pregnant woman are buried on dry land, a ritual of cooling their spirits should be performed. One such incident was reported to have happened in one of the villages. A young girl is said to have given birth to an unwanted baby, killed her, and buried her secretly in a shallow grave on dry land. When what had happened was eventually discovered, the young woman was arrested, and her parents had to perform a ritual to cool the spirit of the baby, and to avert the catastrophe that awaited the community. Beer was brewed, and some of it was taken to the place where the baby was secretly buried. Also taken to the grave was a calabash full of cold water, and a goat's blood. These were poured at the baby's burial place to cool her spirit. Even if the mother of the deceased baby were present, she would not be allowed to eat the meat of the sacrificial goat or drink the beer, as a form of punishment.

4.8.16 Sub-Theme: Burial of Unmarried Woman or Man

In Nyajena, the burial of a person who dies single, and without having begotten any children deserves special rituals. An unmarried man or woman is buried with a rat inserted into one's back to signify his or her child or wife. Some of the interviewees reported the burial of unmarried spinsters with *citrillus lanatus* (*shamba*) representing her child or husband. Some families bury a bachelor with a sausage fruit (*mveva*) representing his wife or child. In the past, a different sausage fruit would have been used during the boy's puberty to ritually lengthen his manhood. Gelfand (1966: 89–90), who did his research in Nyajena reports that, in the past, a stick was inserted into the anus of an unmarried boy or girl during burial.

A special prayer is said to tell the deceased not to come back as an ancestor. The Karanga fear that if a person who dies single is allowed to become an ancestor, he may haunt his relatives because of his craving for having died without being married. So, the spirit of the departed is told not to come back home as an ancestor because anyone who dies before marriage or having begotten a child is automatically disqualified from being an ancestor. The status of being unmarried is some sort of self-disqualification because the ritual of *magadziro*, which makes the spirit of the deceased an ancestor should be performed by one's own children or grandchildren. It is believed that such disqualified spirits may find appeasement among unrelated people and become alien spirits.

4.8.17 Sub-Theme: Burial by Proxy

In Nyajena, burial by proxy was prompted by three scenarios. First, it was performed for a person who would have died away from home, and whose remains had not been found. In the

past, some people died while fighting battles away from home, and their bodies were not be carried back home for burial. There were also people who were devoured by wild animals either at home, or while hunting. The relatives of such people would have a piece of cloth belonging to the deceased buried under a fruit tree such as *Muvonde* (sycamore tree) or *Muchakata* (*Parinari capensis*). The place where the cloth is buried acts as the grave of the deceased for purposes of rituals that require the family members to go to the grave. It seems that a fruit tree was conducive for this ritual to symbolize the fruitfulness of the person symbolically buried there under.

Second, there were also people who would die in foreign lands, and no one in the family knew about the deaths or their burial places. Relatives would wait for the return of the missing relative, but if he did not show up for a considerable period of time, the relatives would consult a diviner. If they were told that the missing person had died, they would bury some cloth or weapon belonging to the missing person under a fruit tree.

Third, burial by proxy was also performed for people who would have died and been buried in a faraway place. The relative who would have attended the burial would take some of the soil from the departed's grave, and carry it back home for burial. The soil could be taken on the day of burial or at some other time in the future. This soil would be buried in a shallow grave at the rural home of the deceased, while being accorded most of the death rituals. This ritual was performed to guarantee each dead member of the family a decent burial place at the rural home of the family. This decent burial would allow the dead to become an ancestor. Again, this burial by proxy would allow other rituals pertaining to the deceased to be performed even if his grave is not known or is located in distant places.

4.8.18 Sub-Theme: Shadow

The phenomenon of the *bvuri* (shadow) belonging to the dead is scary. The Karanga believe that once one dies, his shadow should disappear. However, if the deceased is angry about something, his shadow may reappear. This may happen upon the arrival at the funeral by the witch who would have caused the death. The shadow would only disappear after the perpetrator pays a fine. Alternatively, *varoora* (daughters-in-law), may scold the deceased for the shadow to disappear. The appearance of the *bvuri* is evidence that the dead are still conscious and aware of their surroundings, and that they can still communicate, albeit differently. In my interviews, several examples where the shadow appeared were mentioned.

4.8.19 Sub-Theme: Death of a Chief

In the past, the death of Chief Nyajena was a very solemn occasion, which the participants said was kept a secret for about a month. The mummified body of the chief was buried in a cave, in a sitting position. In Nyajena, two sacred hills, namely, Chimbete and Marevesa, are believed to have been the burial places of the founding chiefs. The two hills are mentioned in their totemic poems. They are referred to as, “vari Chimbete, vari Marevesa, (Those in Chimbete, and those in Marevesa). However, nowadays, the chief is buried in his own village, in the cemetery where his close relatives are buried. His body is not mummified. It is reported that when the previous occupant of the throne of Chief Nyajena died, the resting days were extended to one month. James mentioned that, in the past, if a chief died during the rain seasons, the sacred days on which the people of Nyajena should rest, could be postponed until the following Winter. This

postponement was intended to allow the people to work in their fields, lest they failed to harvest any crops.

4.9 CATEGORY: CULTURAL CHANGES IN BURIAL RITUALS

As has been already alluded to in the above research findings, some of the above-explored rituals have changed or have been discontinued. This section intends to revisit the rituals that have changed to assess the extent and benefits of that transformation. Of course, any change has both advantages and disadvantages, and these will be explored.

4.9.1 Sub-Category: From Dying at Home to Dying at the Hospital

The participants in this study reported that many people from Nyajena now die at the hospital unlike in the past. In the traditional rural setting of Nyajena, before and soon after the colonization of Zimbabwe by the British South Africa Company in 1890, most terminally ill people died at home, surrounded, and comforted by close family members if available.

Occasionally, some patients would die at a traditional medical practitioner's home, while receiving treatment, or on the way to or from a healer's place of healing. Even in the case where a patient dying outside his home, he still would be surrounded and comforted by his close relatives. "There is something sacred and consoling about dying in the midst of one's close relatives," said Michael. Since death is like surrendering to the will of nature, and a complete acceptance of defeat, the accompaniment by family members assures the departing person of continual communion and love by the family.

There are numerous advantages of dying at home. Duda (1982: 60), writing from a different society and context contends that in “dying at home we maintain the ability to choose our own way, whether it be a little decision like what time we eat, or a big one like whether or not to use life-sustaining techniques.” There is something therapeutic about being able to make decisions about one’s healthcare. It is important for the terminally ill person to be able to choose what she wants to eat. In some cases, the dying person may have an appetite for some certain foods, and if she is at home, her family would make such foods available. Duda goes on to list the numerous advantages of dying at home. She asserts that it is natural, and enhances the quality of life because it maintains the respect and dignity of the patient, which makes her feel loved, wanted, useful, and normal, (Duda, 1982: 61).

Furthermore, Duda (1982: 64) claims that “love is a very effective pain neutralizer.” At home, one has the freedom to “express feelings, of grief, anger, and love,” which may be difficult to express in a hospital setting, where one has the feeling of being watched all the time. In fact, in the hospital, one is constantly kept under surveillance. She contends that at home, there is no “travel wear between home and hospital,” (Duda, 1982: 61). In Zimbabwe, the shuttling of the dying person between home and the hospital can be very expensive since most rural people do not own vehicles. Where public transport is used, the trips may be very difficult for the sick person because of the rough roads and overcrowded buses. Duda (1982: 60) also claims that in a hospital, the dying person can easily lose her dignity, humanity, and individuality by being referred to as “the patient in room 204B,” instead of her real name.

Sankar (1991: 194) insists that the patient who dies at home is given autonomy, which helps her maintain her identity by being treated as a social being by the caregiver. Sankar (1991: 2) defines a caregiver as the “person with primary responsibility for someone whose disability or incompetence makes him or her dependent on another to accomplish the task of daily living.” The home patient has a name, which her relatives use to call her. She is allowed to make decisions concerning her care and future. She has dignity.

How did hospitals come about? Backer, Hannon, and Russell (1994: 86) trace the earliest hospitals to the healing temples of ancient Egypt, which were then followed by the Buddhist public hospitals in India, and the Muslim hospitals in the East. Western hospitals, which began as inns eventually started taking in the homeless and the poor within the city to provide lodgings for them. Eventually, they evolved into places where people suffering from acute illnesses were cared for, with the aim of returning them back home alive. Since many of these homeless people could not afford to hire private physicians, most hospitals started offering medication.

Corr, Nabe, and Corr (1997: 201) quoting Simpson and Weiner (1989), say that the word “hospital,” which comes from the Latin word, *hospitale*, meaning a place of “reception and entertainment of pilgrims, travelers, and strangers.” So, initially, all that a good hospital could do was to provide “a place to rest, shelter from the elements, and decent food (Corr, Nabe, and Corr, (1997: 202).” Backer, Hannon, and Russell (1994: 86) argue that until the late 19th century, the appropriate place to die was the home, for hospitals were not quite organized. Backer, Hannon, and Russell (1994: 86) note that as hospitals developed and evolved, their goal was the provision of medical services to cure, ameliorate, and prevent diseases in individuals.

The introduction and establishment of hospitals in Zimbabwe in the 19th century, changed things in the care of the terminally ill people. First, some of the hospitalized people could now die at the hospitals, where they were receiving medication. This new development forced them to die away from their rural homes and relatives. This phenomenon has brought about challenges in the transportation of the corpse back to the rural home where it should be buried. Although there are cemeteries at or near some of these mission hospitals, the Shona people feel obliged to bury the remains of their loved ones in their rural homes, where some of the already departed family members are laid to rest. This obligation brings about the challenge of transportation costs. Participants in this study concurred that transporting a dead body from the hospital to Nyajena rural homes is expensive. In Nyajena, many families have to pay exorbitant transport costs to bring the body of their deceased relative home. The average cost is at least one beast. Of course, this transport cost could have been avoided if the patient had been allowed to die at home.

Second, another challenge encountered by people who die at the hospital concerns the unavailability of close family members during the final dying moments. In most hospitals in Zimbabwe, close relatives can only visit patients during stipulated visiting hours. Unless the patient is a young child, relatives are not allowed to spend the night watching over their ill family member. The nurses and other medical personnel watch over the dying person. Sometimes, the patient dies alone because the nurses on duty would be attending to other patients. In cases where patients die alone, the dying may feel abandoned. That is why some patients may express the wish to return home, and die there, (Backer, Hannon, and Russell, 1994: 100). So, it is likely that a sick person dies alone, or in the presence of the hospital personnel, who are not related to him.

Even if a sick person dies during the visiting hour when the family members are present, the medical practitioners on duty may ask the relatives to leave the room at the onset of death. In the past, the accompaniment of relatives during the last moment of life was imperative, and gave the dying person an opportunity to say his last wishes to the family member present. It also showed him that the family had not deserted him in this crucial moment of his life. To worsen the matter, since close relatives are not present in the hospital ward when death approaches, the *kupeta* (folding of hands and legs) ritual may not be performed.

The participants reported other things that are missing at the hospital. Reflecting on the American health situation (and this can be applied to Zimbabwean hospitals as well), Chapman, (2015: 4), advocates for a healing hospital instead of a hospital that intends to cure, and he criticizes American hospitals for lacking the loving, compassionate, and respectful service for patients. It is this type of service that leads to the healing of the patient. He alleges that in American hospitals, the patient is sometimes treated like a robot, and to some extent, dehumanized. Chapman (2015: 5) claims that “Patient gowns and IV lines seem to signal that the patient has now become something less than a full-fledged human. The hospitalized ill are often referred to with a variety of demeaning sobriquets such as “the gall bladder in 5028” (person with gall bladder disease) or “the frequent flyer” (regular visitor to the ER) or “the screamer” (disoriented patient who groans a lot). For Chapman (2015: 5), the use of terms like these in reference to patients are degrading and marginalizes them. Normal human beings have names, and should be called by their names. The gowns that Chapman criticizes are open at the back and

can easily show the naked body of the ill person, and this diminishes the dignity of the dying person. At home, things are different because patients are dressed in their own clothes.

Third, at hospitals, some of the important rituals that would normally be performed for the dying at home cannot be performed. According to Aiken (1994: 133), these death rituals are intended to acknowledge that life would have been lived fully by paying last respects to the dead, making it easier for the bereaved to express grief, offering a helping hand to the mourners, and allowing both the deceased and the bereaved to experience a rite of passage from one status to another. In fact, in hospitals such rituals are not permitted. For instance, at Morgenster Hospital, and other major hospitals in Zimbabwe, the use of traditional herbs is not allowed. In addition to that, the causes of death given by the hospital medical practitioners are not compatible with what the Shona are used to. For instance, the hospital may explain how mosquitoes and cancerous tumors may have caused the death, but the fundamental question about why this person, at this particular time, is not answered. Why would a mosquito bite one person instead of another? Why would one person have cancer and not another? The traditional diviners can answer such questions.

Fourth, most hospitals in Zimbabwe are located in areas far away from the homes of the people. In the rural areas, most ill people are taken to mission hospitals, far away from the patient's home and relatives. This relocation prevents many family members from visiting the dying person. The dying person may feel isolated. Lawton (2000: 44) writing about the American experience, contends that, ordinarily, patients complain that relatives have ceased to see or visit them. This feeling can be made worse by being relocated to a hospital situated far away from the rural home. People may not have adequate bus fare to visit the dying frequently. Sharing the

same sentiments, Corr, Nabe, and Corr (1997: 170) say that “Persons who are dying most likely are to be concerned about such matters as being abandoned, losing control over their own bodies and lives, and being in overwhelming pain or distress.” Although most hospitals can take care of the physical pain, they may not be able to deal effectively with distress and the feeling of being abandoned. This feeling is worsened when the dying patients are in hospitals far away from their homes, where their relatives cannot afford to visit them. Even if they are able to visit, the length of the visit is limited to just a couple of hours at most.

In addition to dying at the hospital, another huge cultural change concerns the burial of the deceased in urban cemeteries, unlike in the past, where all burials took place in rural areas. This phenomenon has been necessitated by two factors. First, during the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953–1963), many immigrant workers came to work in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) from Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Most of these migrant workers bought homes in towns, and some of them never went back to their countries of origin. These migrant workers popularized town residences and burials.

Second, the industrialization and urbanization of Zimbabwe enticed many Karanga people to leave their rural homes in pursuit of gainful employment in towns. Initially, mostly men worked and lived in those towns, while their families lived in the rural areas. Eventually, many men brought their families to towns to live with them. This movement of people from rural Zimbabwe into urban areas caused the abandonment of rural homes, which were left in the care of elderly parents if they were still alive. Nowadays, many people either rent or have purchased houses in urban areas, and no longer visit their rural homes if they still have them. Those people who still

want to bury their beloved ones in their rural homes, may be hindered by the cost of transporting the remains of the deceased. In some cases, it becomes cheaper to conduct burials in urban cemeteries, closer to their new homes. As a result, many burials are conducted in towns since many rural homes have become dilapidated, abandoned, inaccessible, or are far away from the place of death. The participants said that some people from Nyajena were being buried as far as South Africa because the bereaved families would have failed to transport the remains of their relatives to Nyajena.

Some of the participants reported numerous challenges of burying relatives in urban cemeteries. One of the challenges of doing so is that the corpse may be prepared for burial by strangers at the mortuary. The grave is usually dug by strangers, who in most cases, do not care for rituals such as marking the grave. Consequently, the departed is given a home for her final repose by strangers, which is against the customs of the Karanga. Furthermore, the ritual of washing and dressing the body may not be performed by the relatives, but by the mortuary personnel, unless a special request is made by the relatives of the deceased. In addition to that, the grave may be surrounded by strangers' graves, unlike in rural homes, where it is surrounded by the graves of relatives, who are expected to welcome the spirit of the deceased into the ancestral realm.

4.9.2 Sub-Category: Benefits of Hospitals

Now, it is over a century after the colonization of Zimbabwe, and forty years after Zimbabwe attained its independence from the British colonial masters. The passage of time and acculturation have also brought significant changes in the care of dying people. When people become more seriously ill, they are sometimes transported to the hospital as has been explored

above. Some of them would have been to the same or a different hospital before, and would have been discharged due to the worsening of the illness, so that they can receive palliative care at home. In the Western world, palliative care is recommended for terminally ill people, and is intended to give them comfort care such as pain management while waiting for their final demise. Corr, Nabe, and Cor (1997: 186–187) describe palliative care as addressing the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of the illness, because at this stage of illness, it would have been decided that all possible interventions would have been tried, and no interventions may be capable of halting the disease.

In other words, the goal of palliative care is mitigation rather than curing. Since most Shona people do not understand the palliative care of patients, and are not properly trained to render that care, they may take back the patient to the hospital when they sense that death is around the corner. Some families send back the dying person to the hospital with the hope that a healing miracle would be performed. The Karanga have been made to believe that Western medicines, can cure any ailment. Even though in some cases, some patients' health eventually improves at the hospital, most do not make it. Often, it is futile to take back the ill person to the hospital even though he may have been discharged from the same hospital to receive end of life care at home.

This mentality of relocating the dying person, who would have been discharged from the same or another hospital to receive palliative care at home, back to hospital, may not be entirely blamed on the Karanga. The mentality can be understood in several ways. First, hospitals have advanced medical equipment and technologies that they use to empirically diagnose the cause of the patient's illness. The logic is that, if they can identify the physical cause of the illness, they can

be able to treat and cure it. The relatives of the ill person want to give the patient the best chance of regaining his health, and they believe that the hospital can do that. It is true that there is a certain end of life care, which can only be given at the hospital. For instance, if the patient is unable to feed naturally, the hospital personnel may use nasogastric or intravenous feeding, which is impossible or too expensive and complicated to do in the rural home. The nasogastric tube is used to give the patient medication or liquid food via a tube inserted through his nostrils. Intravenous feeding is used for patients whose digestive system cannot absorb or accept food that is taken or eaten. This feeding is done using a tube inserted through one's vein. In this case, the hospital may provide care for the dying that can improve the quality of her final life, (Duda, 1982: 62).

Second, at home, there may be no one to take care of the sick person because of other vital commitments. A dying person needs special attention and care, and if this is unavailable at home, then the hospital may be preferred. Even if there is a family member who is willing to take care of the dying patient, home care is not easy. According to Sankar (1991: 128), caring for the dying is an "emotionally charged activity," which may invoke deep grief, anger, and a feeling of helplessness in the caregiver. As if that is not enough trouble, "the dying person may vent his or her anger by trying to control the caregiver, placing absurd and unrelenting demands on the caregiver, and retaliating furiously when these demands are not met," (Sankar, 1991: 131). So, the hospital is equipped with personnel that can deal with that anger.

Third, if the patient dies at the hospital, most hospitals have mortuaries in which the body can be kept until transport and funeral arrangements have been made. The regulated temperature in

mortuaries delays the decomposition of the corpse. This temporary storage of the corpse in the hospital mortuary has become more important among Zimbabweans because family members do not often live in the same place as they used to do in the past. It is even more complicated now because many Zimbabweans live in the diaspora, far away from home, and they are likely to take several days to arrive home for a funeral. Many young people of Nyajena have crossed the border into South Africa, where they seek greener pastures. Since all close family members should attend the funeral of a relative if they can, the relatives are able to wait for them, since the body would be at the hospital mortuary.

Fourth, in hospitals, there are trained personnel who know how to avoid the transmission of diseases. Sometimes, people suffer from infectious diseases, and it would be extremely difficult for the family to take care of such a patient at home. There is always the risk of contracting diseases, particularly if there are small children and the elderly at home. There are many hazards at home that can endanger the health of the dying person or her family members. So, taking the terminally ill patient to hospital is seen by many people in Nyajena as a way of protecting the family members from contracting the same disease.

Although the preceding reasons for taking the dying person to hospital are compelling enough, there is yet a fourth reason that is profoundly significant. From a cultural point of view, this relocation of the seriously sick person to the hospital may be induced by the traditional relocation of the ill person (*kusengudza*) mentality. As has been explained in the preceding chapters, the dying person was relocated to another place. This relocation was intended to take away the patient from the witches that might have bewitched him. In addition to that, it was also

meant for the patient to receive treatment at a traditional healer's place. Furthermore, if the sick person were about to die, he was offered an opportunity to reflect on his impending journey, speak out his finally words, and die peacefully, away from the noises in the home. It was believed that dying people needed privacy and peace, which may be scarce at the hospital, where medical practitioners may come in and out of the ward as they please.

4.9.3 Sub-Category: Embalming

In addition to the temporary storage of bodies in mortuaries owned by hospitals, some people take the corpse to funeral parlors, where they are embalmed (treated with chemicals that keep decay at bay), and where make-up may be applied to the deceased. Corr, Nabe, and Corr (1997: 285) define embalming as, "the removal of blood and other bodily fluids from the corpse and their replacement with artificial preservatives that may help retard decomposition and to color the skin." In affirmation of that, Mayer (2006: 25) defines embalming as a "process of chemically treating the dead human body to reduce the presence and growth of microorganisms, retard organic decomposition, and restore an acceptable physical appearance." Mayer, (2006: 27) classifies embalming into four categories: vascular embalming, which is performed by injecting the chemicals into the arteries, cavity embalming, which refers to the direct treatment of the body cavities such as abdomen, thorax, and so on, hypodermic embalming, which uses syringes and needles to inject chemicals directly into the tissue of the body, and surface embalming, where the embalming chemical is directly brought to the body surface to supplement vascular embalming.

Embalming fluid is a solution used to preserve a corpse temporarily or indefinitely after death.

Embalming fluids often "contain a combination of formaldehyde," chemicals like "methanol and

ethanol, and water,” (Mayer, 2006: 55). About eleven liters of the fluid is injected into the corpse through the collar artery and is distributed throughout the body via the circulatory system.

Although preservation is temporary, it can last for weeks or even years. There are numerous benefits of embalming the body. For Mayer (2006: 7, 122), it makes the body presentable, non-offensive, and acceptable by restoring its appearance, and slowing decomposition, which allow the bereaved enough time to gather or make important decisions pertaining to the burial.

4.9.4 Sub-Category: Challenges of Embalming

Even though the Karanga of Nyajena have accepted the changes in their funeral and burial arrangements that were brought about by the embalment of the corpse, still, embalming is not without reproach. Corr, Nabe, and Corr (1997: 288) criticize embalming for putting more focus on the body as if it were still alive. Moreover, it is expensive, and the money used for the process can be used for the care of the living family members of the deceased. In Nyajena, the biggest burial expenses are that of purchasing the coffin and providing transportation for the body. This is so because the closest hospital is Morgenster, which is about two hundred or more kilometers away from the center of the Nyajena. Unless one of the relatives of the deceased has a truck to ferry the corpse, hiring one can be costly. Hence, it has been argued that the money that is spent on embalming, which can be just cosmetic, in some cases, can be used to purchase the coffin and to meet the transportation expenses.

Also, embalming has been criticized for defying the natural order of things. It is natural law that after death, corpses should begin to decompose. This natural process of decomposition compels relatives to lay to rest the deceased as soon as possible. The Karanga believe that the deceased is

transitioning into a new state of life, and this has to be facilitated by the performance of burial rituals. If these rituals are delayed, it means that the process or the journey of the deceased to the ancestral realm is also delayed. This delay may anger the spirit of the deceased and the ancestors unnecessarily.

Further, the chemicals used to embalm a corpse are said to be poisonous, and it is believed that some of them may cause cancer. In rural areas, people may handle the corpse without proper protective clothing or gloves, and this may put them at risk. The mourners may not wash their hands properly after burial, which may be hazardous. This exposure to harmful chemicals is exacerbated by the fact that, among the Karanga of Nyajena, the body is supposed to spend at least one night in the home of the deceased, and in most cases, members of the family spend the night in the same room with the corpse. The people may inhale the poisonous chemicals if there are any leakages from the body.

The other contentious issue concerns the removal of the human blood from the body during the embalming process, in order to replace it with the chemicals. Blood is part of the human body, and its removal undermines the integrity of the corpse. A corpse without human blood, may not be considered integral. This leads to the question, “can the spirit of an embalmed body become an ancestor?” As if that is not confusing enough, the removed blood may be thrown away, or burned by the morticians, thereby desecrating it. Human blood is sacred, and should be given a burial befitting of human blood.

However, despite the setbacks outline above, more and more people from Nyajena appreciate the use of chemicals to embalm the body of a deceased family member, particularly those who die in hospitals or in towns. Half of the participants felt that the advantages of embalming outweighed the disadvantages of not doing so.

4.9.5 Sub-Category: Cultural Changes in Announcing Death

The traditional Karanga people had rituals concerning the announcement of the death of a relative. Most of these rituals have changed. For instance, the traditional use of the drum, blowing of a horn, or the use of emissaries to announce the occurrence of death is almost gone. Nowadays people use phones or social media such as Facebook or WhatsApp to announce the demise of their relatives. All the participants concurred that the use of phones had brought about several advantages in communicating the demise of relatives. It is cost effective and timesaving in the sense that one does not need to travel to announce the occurrence of death. Now, with many family members living far away from their traditional homes, the old way of announcing death would be costly because the emissary would need to fly to notify those relatives living in other countries. The use of phones and social media have made things a lot easier.

Moreover, phones and the internet are faster. At the stroke of a key, a message is sent to all relatives wherever they are. This immediate notification of the occurrence of death encourages the relatives to quickly make travelling arrangements to the burial place. They may also send their death token or present (*chema*) to assist in the burial of the deceased if they are unable to attend physically. If social media is used, the messages sent may keep going as they are forwarded by interested parties. Hence, within a short period, most people are likely to get the

news about the deaths of their relatives. Timely notification of death to relatives is crucial among the Karanga to avoid freaky misfortunes (*mashura*), which are caused by being unaware of a relative's death.

However, this advancement in communication systems has brought about several challenges too. Announcing death on social media or phone, as has become the custom, usually lacks the traditional protocol of death notifications. In the past, the emissaries who were sent to announce the occurrence of death were skilled in the proper manner of making such life-changing announcements. If the death were sudden, and the relatives had not been notified of the illness of the deceased, the emissary would begin the announcement by psychologically preparing the recipient to receive such a message. Instead of announcing the death immediately, the announcer would talk of the serious illness of the deceased as if he were still alive. If the listener were standing or working, he would be asked to sit down. When the announcer felt that the relative was psychologically prepared to receive the bad news, he would tell her of the death of the relative. In addition to the careful and considerate announcement of death, the announcer played the role of a counselor.

On the contrary, the use of social media does not prepare the relatives to receive the sad news of the demise of their family members. Sometimes, pictures of the deceased are posted on social media (if death has happened suddenly in an accident) before the relatives have been notified. This way of announcing death is not only disrespectful to the deceased, but also traumatic to other family members. It shocks them, and may leave many questions unanswered since the context of the death is sometimes missing. One of the participants reported a case where a family

member was runover by a car and died. His family learnt about the tragedy on social media, which she said was very traumatic.

4.9.6 Sub-Category: Burial in Urban Cemeteries

In modern times, the deceased may be buried in an urban cemetery as has been already mentioned above. There are advantages of doing so. First, the urban cemetery may be closer to the deceased's home, and this may significantly cut the transportation costs of both the corpse and the mourners. Second, most urban areas are easily accessible, and burying a relative there enables most relatives to attend the funeral. Most people in urban areas are employed in one way or the other, and traveling to rural areas may force them to take off days. Now, if the burial is done in town, closer to where they live, they may attend the funeral and then quickly go back to their work. Third, the family of the dead does not worry about gravediggers and undertakers because they are provided by the city or the funeral home albeit for a nominal fee depending on the cemetery chosen.

However, burial in urban areas has its own challenges. Since the grave is dug by strangers, there is no marking of the grave (*kutara guva*) ritual, which is an integral aspect of the Karanga burial rites. Unlike in real life, here the dead is given a home by strangers. Even though a relative may offer the home (grave) to the deceased at the time of burial, the place is not chosen by the relatives, and the new home is not dug by close relatives. The ritual of resting the dead on the way to the grave may not be performed since the coffin is transported to the cemetery in a vehicle.

Further, in the urban cemetery, the dead is buried among strangers. There might not be any single relative buried in the same graveyard. For the Karanga, it is crucial that the newly departed be received and initiated by her own ancestors, who most of the time, are buried in the same family graveyard. Although ancestors are not limited by space and time, the Karanga of Nyajena think that the rural home is their abode of choice, and the deceased is likely to join them faster if buried at the rural home cemetery. Some people are concerned about the welfare of the spirit of the deceased in the cemetery among strange spirits. Most of the time, these graves are closely packed together that the mourners may have to step on foreigners' graves, which is tabooed by the people of Nyajena. Moreover, urban graves are not covered by rocks as would happen in Nyajena. The soil that is used to cover the grave may be washed away by the rains, or spread out by wild animals.

Another significant challenge is that many Karanga people were born either in the rural area or at hospitals when their parents were still living in the rural areas, and their umbilical cords are buried in some land in the rural area. So, if the deceased's body is buried in an urban cemetery, far away from where the deceased's umbilical cord is buried, the connectedness with one's roots, ancestors, and God is disturbed. On top of that, when relatives, who may have failed to attend the funeral come to see where their relative was buried, they may not perform the ritual of *kukanda chibwe* because of the unavailability of small stones in towns, or forbiddance of placing stones on graves by council bi-laws.

4.9.7 Sub-Category: The Use of Coffins

Another big cultural change in Nyajena concerns the burying of the body in a coffin. This phenomenon has become fashionable among the Karanga of Nyajena. All the participants recalled only a few people who were buried without a coffin in their villages. In one of the villages, a businessman is said to have been buried without a coffin because the people who were supposed to bring it had delayed, and the body was fast decomposing. But those are exceptions because it has become the norm to place bodies in coffins for burial. In the past, the Karanga of Nyajena used the bier (*bwanyanza*), which was constructed by the sons-in-law (*vakwambo*) or nephews (*vazukuru*) using two poles and tree bark, to transport the corpse to the grave. The body would eventually be laid on a reed mat for burial.

One of the difficulties of using a coffin is that the body has to face upwards, which violates the traditional directions to which the dead body should face. These directions are important because it is believed that the ancestors, which will receive the deceased's spirit can be located in such directions. It is also believed that if the departed is buried facing a wrong direction, he may lose his way to the world of the ancestors. Facing the right direction makes it easier for the spirit to find its way, or locate the realm where ancestors of its family are residing.

Also, it has become customary for the coffin to be carried to the grave by a vehicle if the place is accessible. In most cases where the corpse is transported to the grave in a car, the resting rituals are not performed. At the grave, the coffin is placed on a mechanized stand, which the undertakers may have brought. This stand can lower the coffin into the grave, mechanically. In

such a case, *vakwambo* 's duty of carrying the body and laying it to rest in the grave would have been taken away.

4.9.8 Sub-Category: Significance of Soil Throwing

In many Karanga funerals, the ritual throwing in of soil has been Christianized, and its religious significance changed. Nowadays, it is usually led by the pastor who recites the popular phrase, “*ivhu kuvhu, dota kudota, guruva kuguruva,*” which can be translated as, “soil to soil, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Here, Christians are referring to the presumed destination of the flesh—the soil, from which the body is believed to have been created by God. But the Karanga traditional mourners performed a similar ritual to show their manual involvement and contribution in the burial of their relative, especially if they were too old to assist in the digging or covering of the grave with soil. They also performed this ritual on behalf of the family members who would have failed to attend the funeral. This ritual would prevent the absent family members from encountering *mashura*. *Mashura* means inexplicable and freaky misfortunes that may happen to the family member who may not have attended the funeral of the deceased relative. *Mashura* are also said to happen if the family member has not been notified of the death of a relative. Those relatives who cast the soil on behalf of absent family members may utter a word or two of introducing the absent member. So, although this ritual is still performed by the Karanga, its significance has radically changed.

In urban cemeteries, stones may not be put onto the grave because cement will eventually be used to plaster the grave. One of the advantages of using cement is its durability. Unlike stones, which can be scattered by animals, plastered graves are more durable and appealing to the eye.

Again, it has become custom, particularly in urban cemeteries, to use a cross instead of a headstone, to indicate the position of the head. The cross may be used instead of a headstone even if the deceased were not a Christian. This indiscriminate use of Christian symbols shows how the encounter between Christianity and Karanga traditional Religion has affected the latter.

Children are now allowed to participate in the burial of relatives, although a ritual should be performed after the burial. One of the advantages of allowing little children to attend the burial rituals is the bringing of closure. The other advantage is that children begin to grapple with existential questions and challenges, and may acquire the knowledge of performing some of the rituals. However, young children can be traumatized by seeing the corpse of their departed relatives. If the person would have died of an infectious disease, children may be more vulnerable to catching the disease than adults.

4.10 CONCLUSION

Cultural and religious transformations are inevitable in every society because no culture is static. However, every society should seek to maintain its cultural identity. So, whatever cultural change happens, it should not lead to cultural amnesia. This chapter has recorded the causes of sickness and death, and pre-burial and burial rituals as practiced by the Karanga of Nyajena. What was notable in the interviews and observations made in this study is the fact that, although some of these rituals have changed, many people still remember how they were performed, and what their significance was. Like every cultural change, there are both advantages and disadvantages in most of these changes. However, a people that runs away from its culture is

likely to lose its cultural identity and integrity. Without cultural identity and integrity, a people may cease to be. The ritual experiences recorded in this chapter are sufficient to produce a manual of the Karanga traditional rituals for the dead.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS: POST-BURIAL RITUALS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presented and interpreted the research findings of three death ritual themes, namely, the causes of sickness and death, pre-burial, and burial rituals as they are conceptualized and experienced by the Karanga of Nyajena. Chapter 5 is a continuation of the presentation of research findings that started in chapter 4, and it explores the fourth theme, post-burial rituals. These are rituals that are performed after the burial of the deceased, right from the time the mourners leave the grave, up to a few years later. Chapter 5 begins by giving a table, which summarizes the sub-themes of post-burial rituals. The table is followed by a detailed description of the praxis (sub-themes) and significance of the sub-themes, which are explored simultaneously. The last section of the chapter explores the category of cultural changes that have happened to some of these rituals. All the analysis is done through the perspective of postcolonial theory.

The Karanga believe that death is a process—the beginning of a new life, and not an end to life. Hence, post-burial rituals intermittently continue for several years after burial. These post-burial rituals have two objectives. First, they are the means through which the deceased are initiated into the invisible and spiritual realm of the ancestors. Second, they assist the relatives of the

departed to cope with their grief of losing a family member. Writing from the Western point of view, Pine (1974: 37–38) identifies five stages of grief that the bereaved should be assisted to come to terms with, namely, disbelief of the occurrence of death, questioning why death has happened, the onset of anger, the exacerbation of anger tinged with desperation, and finally reaching some form of resolution. Praagh (2000: 13–25) expands grief stages into the following seven: paralyzing shock, denial, bargaining, anger directed to those one feels caused the death, feeling guilty of having failed to save the deceased, sadness or depression, and finally, accepting the reality of death. These grief stages apply to most cultural groups, in this case, the Karanga.

The information in chapters 4 and 5 was gathered through interviews and the observation of the selected people of Nyajena. As has been mentioned in chapter 4, the researcher attended one burial, and one *magadziro* ceremony. Although more rituals could have been observed, the respondents had all the information that the researcher needed, and they were in concurrence concerning the praxis of such rituals, most of the times. The following post-burial rituals were reported as being performed by the Karanga of Nyajena; *mashopeshope* consulting a diviner about the cause of death (*mashopeshope*), cleansing of undertakers (*kugeza*), placing the stones on the grave (*kukanda chibwe*), resting days (*mahakurimwi*), commiserating with the bereaved (*kubata mavoko*), distribution of personal belongings (*kugova nhumbi*), distribution of estate (*kugova fuma*), cleansing of tools (*masukafoshora*), and the cleansing of weapons (*masukavuta*).

5.2 THEME 4: SUMMARY OF POST-BURIAL RITUALS

The following questions were asked:

1. Describe the Karanga post-burial rituals?;
2. What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?; and,
3. Has any of these rituals changed?

It should be noted that all the information in the table below and the subsequent detailed narrative were provided by the participants, and some of it was observed by this researcher. However, some of the terminology and interpretation came from the researcher's analysis, particularly where the participants could not provide the significance of a given ritual.

TABLE 5.1

SUB-THEME (RITUAL)	CATEGORY (PRAXIS)	CATEGORY (SIGNIFICANCE)	CATEGORY (CULTURAL CHANGES)
Cleansing of undertakers (<i>Kuchenura</i>)	Water may be used for people to wash their hands after burial. It is then sprinkled around the grave.	1. Removing the dirt from the soil. 2. Cleansing the gravediggers.	Still performed.
Throwing the rocks (<i>Kukanda chibwe</i>)	It is done by the relatives who were absent during the funeral. They pick up a pebble, which they place on the grave, while introducing	1. The rock is a token of introduction. 2. It is a symbol of their active participation during the burial.	No longer done if the dead is buried in an urban cemetery. Here, stones are not used. Also, if the grave would be plastered with cement, stones are

	themselves to the departed.		not used. Still performed in rural areas.
Mourning/Resting days (<i>Mahakurimwi</i>)	These are sacred days dedicated to mourning the deceased, which are announced by the village head after the burial.	Allowing people time to grieve for the dead.	Still performed in the rural areas.
Commiserating (<i>Kubata mavoko</i>)	Greeting the bereaved and saying a few words of sympathy. It is done by everyone who was not present at the very moment of death.	1. An opportunity to offer counselling. 2. For accompaniment. 3. To show solidarity.	This ritual continues to be performed.
Distribution of personal belongings (<i>Kugova nhumbi</i>)	Personal belongings of the deceased may be distributed the day after the burial, or on any other day. The clothes and utensils are sprinkled with sacred water first. Muzeze tree leaves are used.	1. Sacred water should be used to prevent people from getting leprosy (<i>maperembudzi</i>). 2. The distribution shows the oneness of the family members.	Nowadays, a few clothes may be distributed, and the rest are reserved for the departed's children.
Estate distribution (<i>Kugova nhaka</i>)	Distribution of more valuable estate, for instance, houses, cows, wives, etc.	1. That life goes on for the remaining family of the deceased. 2. Someone must take care of the dead person's family.	A few people still do it.
Cleansing shovels (<i>Masukafoshoro/Doro remvura</i>)	This ritual is performed a few weeks after burial. The undertakers are offered beer to thank them for burying the deceased. It also cleanses the gravediggers.	1. Ritual cleansing of the tools used to dig the grave. 2. A token of gratitude to gravediggers. 3. Cleansing of the gravediggers.	Some people have replaced this ritual with the Christian ritual of <i>manyaradzo</i> .

Consultation of a Diviner (<i>Mashopeshope</i>)	A diviner may be consulted about the cause of death, if not yet done. This is done a few days before the ritual of <i>magadziro</i> .	1. To identify the cause of death. 2. To appoint the ritual practitioner. 3. To be told about how to perform the ritual.	It is still performed. However, Christian “prophets” may be consulted instead of traditional diviners.
Making of an Ancestor (<i>Magadziro</i>)	This ritual makes the ancestor, and brings him back into the family as a spiritual and invisible member.	1. Life does not end with death, it continues. 2. Ancestors are concerned with the welfare of their family members. 3. Reciprocity of relationship between the dead and the living.	A few people perform this ritual. Some Christians have replaced it with a Christian ritual.

5.3 THEME 4: POST-BURIAL RITUALS IN DETAIL

This theme gives a detailed narrative of the post-burial rituals of the Karanga of Nyajena. Every sub-theme starts with the description of the ritual being explored, and is accompanied by an analysis of significance among the Karanga of Nyajena. The last section of the narrative deals with the category of cultural changes that have been experienced in some of the Karanga post-burial rituals. The information presented comes from both the interviews and my participant observation of the rituals. Hence, the synthesized narrative can be attributed to all the analyzed data unless stated otherwise. Individual participants may be mentioned by name if their contribution is quoted verbatim, or where a remarkable difference exists between the participants’ views.

5.3.1 Sub-Theme: Cleansing of the Undertakers and Tools

The Karanga of Nyajena have no special medicated water used for the cleansing of undertakers and mourners. Undertakers or mourners do not go to the river to cleanse themselves with water. They do not use medicated water at the grave site to purify the mourners. However, at the end of the burial, after closing speeches have been given, some ordinary water is provided for the people to wash their hands before they leave the grave. According to some of the participants in this study, the washing of hands is more for hygienic purposes than ritual purposes. The undertakers and the mourners who would have touched the grave soil, coffin, and stones need to wash their hands before they return to the home of the deceased, where, in most cases, food would be served. Soap can be used if available, and this washing is a sign that the Karanga of Nyajena are concerned about hygiene. Hence, it was erroneous for colonialists to insinuate that Africans were dirty and unhygienic.

However, two of the interviewees (Langton and Maria) asserted that although no ritual significance is attached to the washing of hands after burial, the practice has ritual significance. The water that remains from the washing of the hands by the mourners is usually sprinkled around the grave, after sweeping the area, to clear the surrounding ground of any footprints. The sweeping and sprinkling of water around the grave are intended to enable the bereaved to detect if the witches or other forces of darkness would have tried to or even desecrated the deceased's grave.

Peter and Esther concurred that the washing of hands by the undertakers is also intended to ritually cleanse them from the effects of handling a dead body. The duo further alleged that the sprinkling of the remainder of the water on the area surrounding the grave is intended to cool the deceased, and to communicate to him that he should not attack the undertakers and mourners who would have washed their hands in the water. The departed should remain in his new home; the grave or should venture into the ancestral realm not his original home, until a ritual to welcome him back into the home is performed. It should be noted that there was no agreement as to whether this washing of hands is just ordinary or ritualistic. This ritual shows that cleanliness is not a monopoly of some “civilized” cultures only—every culture does it in its own way.

The washing of hands is also accompanied by the washing of tools that would have been used during the burial. Again, the majority of participants claimed that the cleaning of these tools is just ordinary cleaning of tools after one has used them to dig the grave. Most of them concurred that this cleaning of tools has no ritual significance. Be that as it may, Agatha and Michael strongly argued that the washing of tools has ritual significance. According to Michael, “The washing of hands is a sign to the departed that he should not seek to punish the mourners because they would have completely disassociated themselves with his demise.” It is a declaration of one’s innocence. Michael claims that, in the past, one would whisper the following words as she washed her hands: “*Usanditevera, handisini ndakakuuraya*,” which can be translated as, “Don’t follow me, I am not the one who caused your death.” Before the spirit of the dead is cleansed, all that can be associated with his burial should be left at the grave including the dirt from the soil. At home, his personal belongings, should not be touched or used until a ritual of cleansing the belongings (*kubata nhumbi*) has been performed. The communication is loud and clear; “Please,

do not follow us back into the home. Even the soil that is associated with your grave, we leave it here.” It is very interesting to note that such a practice is also found in other cultures, where the estate of the deceased is not shared or used until the estate is distributed according to the will of the deceased if available, or the laws of the land that govern the distribution of such properties.

Most of the participants said that this ritual is not mandatory, and many bereaved families no longer compel people to wash their hands. However, most undertakers must wash their hands out of necessity—to remove dirt. Also, the tools are not usually washed unless the soil would have been damp. This omission has been attributed to the sequence of events at most burials in Nyajena. Under normal circumstances, food is served soon after the burial, and all the people should wash their hands before eating as per custom. Consequently, some mourners see no need to wash their hands at the grave because they should wash them again at the home of the deceased before having their meal. Unlike the washing at the grave, which is done in a twenty-liter container, the washing at home is done individually. So, the dictates of personal hygiene may have compelled mourners to forego the general washing of hands at the grave and embracing the individual washing at home before the meals. “*Chava Chirungu, chino* (It’s now modern time),” said Sarah.

5.3.2 Sub-Theme: Placing of Ritual Rocks

Not all the relatives manage to attend the funeral of their deceased family members. Some people arrive at the burial place soon after the burial, and others may not arrive to pay their last respects until several weeks or months later. Most of these people who are absent during the burial of their relatives would have had one of the elderly relatives throwing the soil into the grave on

their behalf. But as soon as the absentee arrives home to perform the ritual of *kubata mavoko*, she should also perform the ritual of *kukanda chibwe*, which means throwing a stone or pebble onto the grave. In Nyajena, this ritual is performed early in the morning before sunrise. The family member who was absent at the funeral is accompanied to the grave, by another family member, particularly a close relative of the deceased. If there are more than one person, all can visit the grave together. As they come closer to the grave, the absentee picks up a pebble. If there are more than one absentee, each of them picks up her own pebble. At the grave, the absentee places or throws the pebble on top of the grave, or closer to the headstone while introducing herself. “My name is Chipu, your granddaughter. Have a safe journey,” can be used as the introduction. Alternatively, the pebble may be thrown at any part of the grave, hence the phrase, *kukanda chibwe* (throwing of the pebble or stone). Elsewhere, particularly in Western cultures, family members who would have been absent during the burial of a relative are expected to bring flowers to the grave of the deceased as a sign of their concern and respect.

Throughout the interviews, there was a consensus concerning the significance of the *kukanda chibwe* ritual among the Karanga of Nyajena. It symbolizes three things. First, it is a sign of the familial or communal spirit of togetherness. It shows that even if one could not attend the funeral and would have failed to assist others in the burial process, he is making his contribution now. The pebble is a symbol of the absentee’s expected manual contribution in the burial of a deceased family member. Once the pebble has been placed or thrown on the grave, the relative is seen as having assisted others in burying the deceased. This participation is believed to please the spirits of all the departed. Second, Judas noted that the Karanga believe that it takes a village to raise a child or build a home. The pebble that is placed on the grave signifies the communal

assistance in raising a child or building the home for the dead. The buried departed is like a baby in its mother's womb, and every family member is expected to assist in any way possible in the upbringing of that child. Third, the Karanga of Nyajena believe that if this ritual is not performed, the spirit of the dead may be upset because of the neglect by the absent family member, for failure to attend a relative's funeral is considered to be as bad as neglecting one's living relative. Comparatively, the necessity of attending a relative's funeral is upheld in most cultures of the world. This shows that, although colonialists, impressed on the minds of the Africans that they were "uncultured" and "backward," this ritual gives evidence that the African peoples were well advanced in paying their last respects to the departed members of their families.

5.3.3 Sub-Theme: Resting Days

Under normal circumstances, the village head, or the ritual leader of the family, after having consulted the village head, announces the mourning days, which should be understood as resting days for the villagers. The Karanga of Nyajena call these days, *mahakurimwi*, which literally means, not working in the field. People may continue to do other types of work such as building or washing clothes, but they are not supposed to work in the fields. These sacred days are more visible during the rainy season, when people normally work on the fields because they have to stop working in the fields. The number of days depends on the position of authority of the deceased person, and the time of the year in which his death occurs. Most of my interviewees agreed that the mourning days range from two to three days, for ordinary people, and more for village heads, spirit mediums, and the chief. Usually, only the occupant of the chieftaincy of Nyajena is allocated a whole month of *mahakurimwi*. However, according to James, if Chief

Nyajena were to die during the beginning of the rain season, when planting and sowing of seeds should be done while the soil is still moist, *mahakurimwi* may be postponed to a later month or even the next Winter to enable people to plough and sow their crops in time.

Most participants contended that, in Nyajena, this ritual symbolizes several things. First, it is a solidarity and accompaniment ritual. Although the deceased belongs to a particular family, her death affects the whole village. Hence, all villagers should be given an opportunity to accompany the bereaved in mourning the deceased. Since the bereaved family cannot go back to the field immediately after burying their family member, other villagers show their solidarity by staying at home as well. Second, the Karanga believe that the land and its fruitfulness belong to ancestors. When a person dies, the ancestors have the responsibility to welcome the deceased into the ancestral world. So, during these first few days after burial, it is believed that ancestors are busy giving orientation to the new member of the fold. Therefore, people should not work in the fields when the ancestors, the owners of the land who induce its fertility are resting.

Third, *mahakurimwi* gives the undertakers an opportunity to rest after the hard work of burying their relative. By the time they return to work in the fields, they would have regained and renewed their strength. Fourth, death makes not only a home, but the whole village “dark.” According to several of the participants in this study, this darkness is caused by the unavailability of ancestors because they will be busy elsewhere. If one insists on going to the field during the mourning time, his crops may be defiled, and may not produce a good harvest. Also, the transgressor may get into a freak accident because working on the mourning days upsets the ancestors. This ritual shows the genius of the Karanga people, and their utmost consideration for

the welfare of both the invisible and visible communities. Western cultures also encourage employers to allow off days to the bereaved employees. This time off allows them to bury their dead, rest, grieve, and also to visit the burial place thereafter.

Except for people who are buried in urban cemeteries, the ritual of *mahakurimwi* is still practiced. Urban people do not rely on farming for livelihood, so the ritual does not have any significance for them. Even if they wanted to observe the resting days, their employers may not understand or respect the ritual. However, most employers allow their employees some days off to go and give their last respect to their dead. These off days are given to close relatives only, unlike *mahakurimwi*, which are observed by the whole neighborhood, which is a sign of African togetherness.

5.3.4 Sub-Theme: Commiserating with the Bereaved

Commiserating with the bereaved, which is known as *kubata mavoko* is one of the most pervasive post-burial rituals. The Shona word, *kubata*, means to touch or hold or handle, and *mavoko* means hands. Therefore, *kubata mavoko*, literally means holding or touching hands, a practice which refers to the greeting of the bereaved by mourners while they say a few words of condolences or empathy. In fact, this ritual begins as soon as a person dies, and continues throughout all other burial rituals, until well after the burial. Hence, it can also qualify as a pre-burial or burial ritual.

All the people who arrive at a funeral should greet all the mourners who would have arrived there before them. Although formal greetings are expected at any gathering, *kubata mavoko* is

accompanied by a few words concerning the occurrence of death. One can use any of the following: “*nenhamo dzakuwirai, nedzoi, nematambudziko, nedzinoparadza*” This is a way of acknowledging the occurrence of death and the grief it causes upon the remaining relatives. The one being greeted responds by saying, “*dzakavonekwa*,” meaning that death or misfortune has been experienced. When all the people who are sitting outside the house in which the deceased is lying have been greeted, the new arrival, then gets into the hut in which the corpse and the next of kin are. The same ritual greeting is exchanged. The close relative of the departed may briefly explain how the deceased would have died, the nature of his disease, and his last words. Sometimes, the person manning the corpse responds by extending her hand to offer a greeting or by sobbing, without saying a word. The sobbing becomes more intense and louder if the new arrival is a close family member.

This ritual is performed throughout the funeral whenever a new arrival appears. The ritual is also expected of those relatives and villagers who would have missed the funeral. Whenever they have an opportunity to visit the family of the deceased, they should perform the *kubata mavoko* ritual. If the deceased were a close family member, they may also perform the *kukanda chimbwe* the following morning of their arrival. While *kukanda chibwe* is for close family members only, *kubata mavoko* is for everyone. It can be done by people who live far away from the home of the deceased to relatives of the dead.

Although half of my interviewees were not sure concerning the significance of this ritual, the other half suggested possible meanings. First, a greeting is a sign of solidarity and peace. *Kubata mavoko* is a sign that the mourner comes in peace, and would like to share the sorrow that the

bereaved family is experiencing. In life and death, the human person belongs to the community, and because of that, the community shares the sadness and sorrows of having lost a member.

Second, *kubata mavoko* is a declaration of one's intention to attend a funeral. According to Judas, "It signifies that one has come for nothing else except paying one's last respect to the departed." The new arrival should declare it as soon as she arrives at the funeral. It should be declared to everyone who is already there. It should continue to be declared whenever a new mourner arrives. Therefore, throughout the funeral, mourners are reminded of the purpose of their gathering—to pay their last respect to the dead, and to commiserate with the bereaved.

Third, it allows the new arrival to register his presence at the funeral by presenting himself both to the deceased and the closest relatives of the deceased who are present. The close relatives of the deceased will always know the attendees of their beloved's funeral because all *kubata mavoko* must end in the hut where they are manning the corpse. Finally, it was suggested that the ritual is intended to confuse evil spirits that may have accompanied the people coming to attend the funeral. The greetings that are done before one enters the house in which the remains of the departed are stored is intended to confuse the evil spirits or even to chase them away before the new mourner presents herself into the house in which the corpse is. This ritual is also performed in Western cultures, and they call it condolences.

5.3.5 Sub-Theme: Distribution of Personal Belongings

The distribution of the deceased's personal belongings such as clothes, kitchen utensils, and other small things is done a day or a few months after the burial. Most families in Nyajena prefer doing it on the day after the burial because of the presence of most stakeholders. It is convenient

to perform the ritual at this time because it would be difficult to gather all the family members at some other time after the burial. The process of the distribution is simple. If the deceased is a woman, her own people take charge of the ritual proceedings. If the departed is a man, his nephew may be chosen as the ritual practitioner to distribute the belongings. If the deceased has left a written or verbal will, the leader stands guided by it, diverting a little bit in pursuit of justice. If there is no written or verbal will, the estate distributor may use his discretion, of course, after consulting the close family members of the departed.

If the deceased is a married woman, her personal belongings should be treated with special care, lest her spirit is upset. Her own family of origin should distribute her belongings. For instance, all her kitchen and bedroom things are taken by her own relatives. If she had cows which are offspring of the beast of motherhood, or other livestock purchased out of her personal work such as potting, they too should be inherited by her own relatives.

On the day of the distribution of small personal belongings, all the clothes and other personal belongings to be distributed are taken outside where all the relatives are sitting on reed mats or stools. The ritual leader then sprinkles the belongings to be distributed with sacred water made from *muzeze* (*peltophorum africanum sond*) and water. Some families are reported to use some herb called *dambamachira* or *chifumuro*, which is normally used to protect children from illnesses and attacks by witches and evil spirits. The leaves of *muzeze* are then used to sprinkle the medicated water on the property to be distributed, and on the people. In some families, the ritual leader and all the family members should briefly touch or handle all the things to be distributed after dipping their hands into the sacred water. Hence, the ritual is also called *kubata*

nhumbi (handling clothes). It is believed that if these personal belongings are touched by any person before this ritual, the person who would have touched them will be struck by leprosy (*maperembudzi*) or some skin disease called *zvisasa* (ring worm).

After all the personal belongings have been handled, they are then distributed to the qualifying family members, both present and absent. No one should refuse to take whatever is offered to him. If a person does not want to keep whatever is given to him, he should accept it firstly, and then offer it to a more deserving family member present. However, all the interviewees concurred that, everyone should accept a symbolic utensil such as a spoon, or fork to affirm that she is part of the group, and to confirm that her refusal to accept more expensive things is not out of spite and malice of the deceased.

Some of my participants reported how some family members, particularly if the departed is a married woman, abuse this ritual. Some relatives were said to have taken everything belonging to their female deceased relatives, ignoring the fact that the woman would have left children who may need to use some of the clothes and kitchen utensils. On the other hand, some relatives of deceased women were reported to have left everything for the children of the dead and the son-in-law after accepting symbolic items such as spoons or plates.

Some of the participants (Thomas, Harry, and James) reported an interesting phenomenon that they said was becoming popular in some families in Nyajena, whereby the inheritors are first asked to claim back whatever piece of clothing they would have bought for their deceased parent, particularly if the deceased is a man. Once they get back their clothing contributions to

the dead parent, they may redistribute them among other family members present. According to Harry, this is intended to shame those children who do not care for their parents. It is also used for didactive purposes to educate people of like minds who would be present.

The rituals surrounding the distribution of personal belongings have several meanings. It makes clear the Karanga belief that death brings darkness into the family. Death makes people who come into contact with the corpse unclean, and they need cleansing. It defiles even the clothes and other items that belong to the deceased. Therefore, both the people and the personal belongings of the deceased need to be cleansed to prevent the people from diseases associated with the dead, such as leprosy and ringworm. The participants were not quite certain if leprosy was prevalent in Nyajena in the past, but they mentioned some names of people who suffered from the disease. This unavailability of statistics of lepers in Nyajena was compounded by the establishment of leper colonies in Zimbabwe, such as Mutemwa Leprosy and Care Center, established in the 1930s, where all people suffering from the disease were rehabilitated until death. But the fact that the people of Nyajena perform rituals to prevent people from getting the diseases shows that it was common, and that people could prevent family members from contracting the disease.

In addition to that, the ritual symbolizes the solidarity and togetherness of the family members. Just like they would have offered gifts when the deceased was born, they again get a gift from his belongings after his death. It is a sign that everything belongs to everyone. They come together to share the sorrow, gifts, food, and belongings. Furthermore, in the case of a married woman's death, the way her personal belongings are distributed shows that even after having

been married for many years, and having given birth to children with her husband, she still belongs to her family of origin. Even her own children are not related to her, for she remains a stranger in her marital home. Hence, everything that belongs to her may be taken by her own people. However, the participants told me that, the relatives of the deceased woman should always leave some of her personal belongings for the children, and in some cases, for her own sister or niece who may be offered to the widower as a wife. Even though this arrangement is encouraged, some of the participants reported of incidences where the relatives of the deceased women took away all her personal belongings. In some way, it serves to counteract the misinformation which was peddled by early Western writers that the bridewealth paid for a woman was her purchase price. She is never purchased, for she continues to be a member of her family of origins.

Finally, the distribution of personal belongings shows that no single family member should try to enrich himself out of someone's death. Everything should be shared in death as it was in life. When the deceased becomes an ancestor, he will care for all the family members even though the ancestor may choose only one host through whom to communicate its wishes. The ancestral host does not enjoy more protection than other family members.

5.3.6 Sub-Theme: Cleansing of Tools

A few weeks after the burial, a ritual called *doro remvura* (beer of water) or *masukafoshoro* (cleansing the tools or shovels) is brewed to thank the undertakers. Most of the participants asserted that this ritual has no deeper significance attached to it. It is just a token of thanking the gravediggers and all who would have assisted during the burial. Gelfand (1966: 82) asserts that

in the past, at the *doro remvura*, a sacrificial goat or ox was “sacrificed as a compensation for the flesh of the body which they cannot eat.” Nowadays, a beast or goat may be slaughtered but has no ritual significance, or its significance has been lost. If *mashopeshope* has already been done, the outcome would be revealed to the people during this gathering.

However, two of the participants contended that the ritual signified several things. It is also called *doro remvura* because it acts like water that would have cleansed the gravediggers on the day of the burial. Since some families do not perform the ritual cleansing immediately after the burial, this ritual is intended to cleanse them. According to Michael, it also quenches the gravediggers’ thirst because of the hard labor of digging that they would have done on the day of burial. The new nomenclature, *masukafoshoro* is very telling. The tools that would have been used during the burial become defiled by their close conduct with the dead, and they also need cleansing. However, the term, *masukafoshoro*, is a compound term coming from two Shona words one of which is derived from the English language. *Masuka* comes from the verb *kusuka*, which means cleaning, *foshoro*, is a Shona derivative of the English word, shovel. This term is an indication of the changes happening even in the names of Karanga death rituals. Maria advocated going back to the original term, *doro remvura*, because *masukafoshoro* distorts the significance of the ritual.

5.3.7 Sub-Theme: Diviner Consultation

Mashopeshope is also known as *kurasha mushamhu*, and is performed a few days or even weeks before the *magadziro* ritual. *Mashopeshope* comes from the Shona word, “*kushopera*” which means to consult a diviner. In Nyajena, the relatives of the deceased consult a diviner concerning

five things in relationship with *magadziro* and the welfare of the departed relative. First, to establish how the *magadziro* ritual should be performed. This advice is crucial because if the procedure is not followed meticulously, the deceased may reject the ritual. Second, to be guided by the diviner in choosing the ritual leader for the *magadziro*. Usually, the diviner appoints the oldest family member or the one who is considered the family's default ritual leader. Third, to find out if the deceased is happy about the proceedings. Fourth, to have the cause of the death revealed if this was not done soon after burial. Finally, to establish if the spirit of the deceased is still clean, and has not been defiled by evil spirits or witches. According to Agatha, in the past, the delegation would take a piece of cloth belonging to the deceased, and would give it to the diviner so that he could tell them the cause of their relative's death. This taking of a piece of cloth belonging to the deceased to a diviner is also reported Gelfand to have been practiced by the Shona in the past, (1966: 83).

This ritual is significant because the Karanga want to perform the *magadziro* flawlessly. Any mistake of commission or omission would render the ritual invalid and their efforts futile. If the ritual is rejected by the deceased, it would have to be performed again. This goes a long way to show how careful the Karanga are in performing death rituals.

5.3.8 Sub-Theme: Making the Ancestor

The ritual of *magadziro* also known as *kurova guva* is the most crucial in the making of an ancestor, and has been described as the ritual that “completes the ceremonies for the dead,” (Gelfand, 1966: 88). The Karanga of Nyajena perform *magadziro* at least six months after the burial. However, the promptness in its performance depends on the availability of the sacrificial

beast, and the deceased's children's willingness to perform it. The Karanga of Nyajena use the term *kugadzira mudzimu*, meaning, to make an ancestor. This term shows the important part the living relatives play in initiating a deceased family member into ancestorhood. Maria affirmed that the time of the ritual is determined by the relatives of the deceased, of course, in consultation, with family members who work in urban areas or live away from the rural family home. This consultation is crucial since all family members should attend. Relatives should contribute the grains to be used to brew the sacrificial beer, but the sacrificial beast is provided by the children of the deceased. This beer is supposed to be brewed by women who have gone past menopause, for blood is believed to defile the ritual. Just a few days before the ritual, a few relatives should perform the *mashopeshope* ritual.

It should be noted that, unless stated otherwise, all the participants concurred about the praxis of the *magadziro* ritual in Nyajena. However, they observed that there are slight insignificant variations. On the day of the ritual, a delegation of close family members, comprising both women and men, wake up at dawn, take a clay pot of beer, and go to the grave where the deceased was buried. James contended that "If the ritual is being performed for a woman, this rite is done on the eve of the ritual because women were married (*kutiziswa*) in the evening." The delegation is on a special mission; to bring the ancestor home. Upon arrival at the grave, the team may sit or kneel around the grave, offer the beer and ground tobacco, popularly known by the Shona as *bute*, to the spirit of the dead by pouring a little onto the grave, and then each of the delegates takes a sip from the container. The ritual practitioner then cuts a sizeable branch of *combretum mole flora* (*mupembere*) tree, which is then pulled around the grave, or used to sweep the grave while instructing the spirit of the deceased to ride on it. The branch on which the spirit

is riding is then pulled back home amid much jubilation, whistling, and ululation. The one pulling the branch should never look backwards (*kucheuka*) to the grave because the ancestor may escape and run back to the grave. The team is met by the crowd at home, who also join in the jubilation. The delegation enters the round kitchen and hangs the *mupembere* branch on which the spirit of the deceased is riding, inside the roof of the hut. The branch stays there until another ritual is performed to remove it. There is more joyful dancing and singing. The spirit of the deceased is then offered more beer and ground tobacco as a sign of welcome. At this juncture, the spirit is not yet an ancestor, and no one knows for sure if the spirit has accepted the ritual.

Then all the people move out of the hut in which the spirit is supposed to be, and the *mhutsashungu* or *mbudzi yeshungu* (goat of anger/appeasement), is brought to the threshold of the hut by the nephew (*muzukuru*). This goat is slaughtered for a person who would have died with some unresolved anger. The diviner may tell the delegation of the need to sacrifice this goat. If the deceased is a woman, a female goat, which would have given birth (*nhunzvi*) is used. Elsewhere, Gelfand (1966: 85) refers to this goat as *norwa*. A male goat is used for a man. The *muzukuru* sits inside the hut, while holding the goat by the front leg, making it stand on the threshold. Relatives, starting with the oldest, stand on a line, pouring beer on the back of the goat while introducing themselves. The pouring of beer is also performed for the absent family members. It is believed that if the goat shakes its body after beer has been poured on its back, the ancestor has accepted the ritual, and has indeed come home. The shaking of the goat is accompanied by much more jubilation. However, in the sad scenario of the goat refusing to

shake its back, it is interpreted to mean that the spirit of the deceased has rejected the ritual, and a delegation must consult a diviner to find out the cause of the ancestor's anger and refusal.

The sacrificial goat is then slaughtered, and all its meat is roasted, and when ready, it is consumed without salt. None of participants seemed to know why salt should not be used. But, just looking at the characteristics of salt such as giving taste to food, and by so doing changing the original taste and flavor of the food, its use may be tabooed because it may change the mind of the ancestor. At this point, the ancestor is not yet fully initiated, and the relatives do not want it to change its mind by going back to the grave. All the remains of the sacrificial goat that include the head, legs, hide, and bones are burnt by the fire. Some families may burn the *mupembere* branch, which would have brought home the ancestor, in the same fire. However, other families perform a special ritual later, to dispose of the branch by putting it in a termite hole, or burying it in the cattle kraal. This burial or burning of the sacred branch is done to prevent witches from stealing it, and turning the ancestor into an evil spirit.

As soon as the sacrificial goat is consumed, the beast of *magadziro* is slaughtered. For a woman, a cow is sacrificed, and for a man, a bull, or sheep (*gondohwe*) is sacrificed. In Nyajena, a single beast may be used for *magadziro* of two related persons, for instance, brothers or sisters, but never a husband and wife. Once the beast is skinned, the ritual leader cuts the sacrificial meat from different parts of the beast, such as right fore-leg (*bandauko*), heart (*mhumba*), liver (*chiropa*), hind leg (*chidzva*), *guru* (stomach), small and large intestines (*vura*), lungs (*mapapu*), ribs (*mbabvu*), back (*musana*), *gwatata*, chest (*chityu*), and neck (*mutsipu*). Legs and the head are not used. These pieces of meat are cooked in a clay pot without salt. *Sadza* from *rapoko* is

also prepared. When both the sacrificial meat and *sadza* are ready, they are brought to the threshold and consecrated amid much clapping of hands (*gwatara*) and ululation (*mhururu*). The ritual leader, using his own hand, then offers a morsel of *sadza* and a piece of meat to each of the close family members who are gathered in a semi-circle, facing the threshold. Once this ritual is performed, more beer and food may be given to the people. The beer is allocated to people according to their villages. The celebration can go on until the evening, when neighbors are supposed to return to their homes.

It should be noted that the *magadziro* ritual praxis, as practiced by the people of Nyajena, is almost uniform. However, slight differences were reported in the significance given to some specific rites within the ritual. It is interesting that the ancestor is asked to ride on the branch of a tree as if he is in the physical form. As a spirit, an ancestor can just fly home. However, whether it flies home or rides on the sacred branch, the branch's placement inside the kitchen roof symbolizes the presence of the ancestor.

The pouring of the sacred beer on the back of the goat, which is done to ascertain the cooperation and acceptance of the ritual by the ancestor shows that the Karanga do not take anything for granted. There has to be a physical signal that the deceased has indeed become an ancestor. If the goat shakes its body, the deceased has indeed become an ancestor. If the goat refuses to shake its body, then the deceased is not happy with the proceedings, and a remedy has to be sought.

The sacred meal symbolizes the presence of the ancestor, and his affinity to every family member who partakes in the meal. It shows the communion between the newly initiated ancestor,

all other family ancestors, and the living members of the family. This ritual resembles the Christian Holy Communion popularly known as *Chirairo* by the Karanga of Nyajena. This meal is a very significant ritual that should not be allowed to disappear.

5.3.9 Sub-Theme: Distribution of the Estate and Inheritance

The distribution of the estate, making of the sacred bangle, and inheritance of widows are technically part of *magadziro*, which are performed on the second morning of the ritual. If the newly initiated ancestor is a male, a sacred bangle (*rukanda*), which is extracted from the right fore-leg of the beast, and should be cut off in a complete circle, is made by the nephew, who then slides it onto the left wrist of the eldest son of the deceased. According to Gelfand (1966: 86), in the past, some families fitted the *rukanda* onto the right wrist. Also, some families extract it from the beast's left foreleg. *Rukanda* is only for male ancestors. This bangle signifies the inheritor's newly acquired authority derived from his father's name and estate. Since the bangle is cut around the leg of the beast close to the hoof in a continuous cut, it also signifies the family unity which the newly appointed head of the family is supposed to uphold and foster. It reminds him that the authority he wields belongs to the deceased father, and should not be abused. In Nyajena, the bangle would be removed by the same nephew after a year, and he is paid a cow for his duties. This removal of *rukanda* and the *mupembere* branch left inside the kitchen hut roof on the day of *magadziro* may be done on the same day, by the *muzukuru*. Furthermore, the *rukanda* symbolizes that the ancestor would inspire the bearer in taking care of the family. It is an assurance of the ever presence of the ancestor as some of the participants put it. It also shows the intimate relationship that exists between the one wearing it, and the ancestor. All other family

members should render to him the respect that was due to the deceased, for he is now the embodiment of his authority.

Next, the eldest son is given the name of the deceased. All the participants concurred that this ritual is performed by all the Karanga of Nyajena. The oldest son sits on a reed mat, and is covered with a blanket as the new name is pronounced. People may sing, dance, offer gifts, and ululate as if a child has been born. The inheritor then assumes the charge of the estate of the deceased, which he is supposed to use to care for his own family, his mother, and siblings. The giving of the ancestor's name to his oldest son serves to assure the family that the deceased has come back home, and continues to live and exercise his authority through his son. If the deceased would have left young wives, another ritual of wife inheritance immediately follows.

5.3.10 Sub-Theme: Jumping the Weapons

This ritual is intended to check if the widow or widows had been faithful to their deceased husband from the time of the burial until the period of *magadziro*. *Vuta* can be an axe, bow and arrow, gun, or spear belonging to the late husband that is placed across the doorway of the round kitchen. The weapon would have been placed in a *dura* (granary) on the day of burial. On this particular day, the *muzukuru* would wash the *vuta* in a river, and this ritual is called *masukavuta*. The widows are then asked to jump over the weapon into and out of the house. If any of the widows would have been unfaithful to the deceased husband, she is likely to refuse to perform the ritual. It is believed that any attempt to jump over the weapon by any widow who would have been unfaithful to her deceased husband may cause her to fall onto the ground, or have her private parts struck by some kind of disease. In the case of a widow refusing to jump the weapon,

her relatives may be asked to pay a fine. If she jumps over the weapon successfully, it invokes celebration among her own relatives.

This ritual is intended to encourage widows to remain sexually inactive until the *magadziro*, for it is believed that the home is dark or defiled because of the death. Some of the interviewees complained that the ritual is performed by widows only, not widowers, which they pointed out to be gender insensitive. Although this insight is significant, it should be noted that the Karanga society is patriarchal. So, the biases, though unpalatable, are expected, and even tolerated. There was no explanation as to why only widows and not widowers should be subjected to this ritual. Perhaps, the Karanga wanted to guard against inheriting widows who were already pregnant with someone else's child since there were no pregnancy tests that would detect early pregnancies. Also, although men are not required to perform the ritual, they are also required to remain celibate if possible.

The *kugara nhaka* part of the ritual occurs soon after the widow has successfully jumped the weapon. All the widows are required to choose a man from the qualifying relatives of the husband to inherit them. These qualifying members are nephews, brothers, or even eldest sons of the deceased by a different woman. The qualifying contestants sit in a circle, with the widow kneeling in the middle, holding a dish of water and a towel. She offers the water to the man she wants to inherit her as a husband. If she is no longer interested in a conjugal relationship, she may offer the water to her own son. By so doing, she is declaring that she is no longer interested in a conjugal relationship but would like to be economically supported by her own son. If she takes this route, she is supposed to remain chaste as long as she lives in the home of her deceased

husband. If she is interested in a sexual relationship, she may choose any of the other qualifying men by offering him the water to wash his hands, and then wipe them with a towel. This washing symbolizes the chosen inheritor's acceptance of the responsibilities over the widow and her children if she has any. In fact, no one is expected to refuse the widow if chosen because she is an offer from the ancestors.

This ritual is intended to provide a breadwinner and husband for the widow, who in most cases, in the past, was not gainfully employed, and had young children who needed support. It was not intended for the satisfaction of the inheritor's sexual greed, although this intimacy came as a byproduct of the other responsibilities. Hence, among other Shona ethnic groups, a man could inherit a widow with the intentions to only care for her economic, not sexual needs. In addition to that the ritual would provide the widow with someone to care for her emotional and conjugal needs. This provision was important because, in some cases, it would be difficult for a widow to find a stranger to marry her. The children that result from the new union belong to the departed, which affirms the Shona's belief in the continuation of life in hereafter, albeit in the spiritual form. The inheritance of the widow is a sign that the departed family member is still an active and concerned member of the family. The children of the deceased would be taken care of by the new father, who in the general sense of the word, would have been a "father" (*babamunini*) to them even before the death of their biological father.

5.4 CATEGORY: CULTURAL CHANGES

All the participants in this study acknowledged that the praxis and significance of many post-burial rituals of the Karanga of Nyajena have changed. One of the rituals that have significantly changed is the *kukanda chibwe* ritual. Since many Karanga people are being buried in urban cemeteries, stones are no longer used to cover the grave. This development might be a result of urban area ordinances that forbid it. In some cases, stones are no longer used even in rural areas if the relatives of the departed intend to use bricks and cement to build the grave. This construction is done several months or even years after the burial. In such cases, only soil is used to cover the grave. Eventually, perhaps after many months, the grave mound is covered by bricks, and the walls are then plastered. Although cement graves look smarter, the relatives who are absent during the burial cannot perform the *kukanda chibwe* ritual since this would make the grave dirty. Even if they wanted to do so, the pebbles may not be available in urban cemeteries. Moreover, the placing of pebbles on graves may be against town council ordinances.

However, the latecomer mourners can still introduce themselves at urban cemetery graves as they would do in rural graves. Some of the participants observed that some families now prefer to place flowers on the grave instead of pebbles. Harry stated that there was nothing wrong with the offering of flowers to the deceased by placing them on top of the grave provided both the buried and the living share a common understanding of their significance. Unfortunately, most people of Nyajena, who live in rural areas, would rather have stones placed on their graves than flowers. This does not mean that they do not value flowers; they do, but pebbles are more symbolic in their worldview, than flowers. After all, flowers wither, but stones are durable,

which is a symbol of the longevity of the spiritual life the deceased would have attained now. It was also mentioned that some Karanga people never offer flowers to their parents when they are still alive, therefore, the same parents may not appreciate flowers after death.

The ritual of *kubata mavoko* is still valued by the Karanga of Nyajena. However, because of so many factors that affect the attendance at funerals such as urbanization, resettlement, and the diaspora, which have made it almost impossible for most family members to live in the same locality, some people may perform the ritual through phones or social media. This way of performing the ritual of *kubata mavoko* has its own advantages and weaknesses. It is faster and cheaper since one does not need to travel to perform the ritual. At the stroke of a key, one can give his condolences to the bereaved. However, its fastness becomes its own undoing. *Kubata mavoko* is not supposed to replace the ritual of announcing the death. There is always a danger of performing *kubata mavoko* before the relatives of the deceased have been officially notified of the death. If this happens, they are likely to get shocked because of their unpreparedness to receive such devastating news. People must find out if the person they want to extend their condolences to has been notified of the death. In some cases, this has not been done properly. In addition to that, talking on the phone cannot replace being with the grieving person. Sometimes, the accompaniment of grieving people does not include talking, but just sitting with them in utter silence.

Notable changes to the ritual of distributing or handling the clothes (*kubata nhumbi*) were also reported. More people, particularly Christians, now sprinkle the belongings of the deceased with holy water, which would have been blessed by their priest, pastor, or any other authorized church

leader. Hence, *muzeze* and *chifumuro* have been replaced by the holy water. Be that as it may, the rules of distribution are still the same. A question has been asked as to whether the Christian holy water has the same effects as the *muzeze* and *chifumuro* sacred water. When asked if the two sacred waters can be used interchangeably, some participants felt that the onus was upon particular families to decide. However, looking at it from a postcolonial theory perspective, if the Karanga of Nyajena would like to keep their cultural identity and integrity, they should stick to their own sacred water. There is no integrity in roping in the Christian holy water into a Karanga religious ritual. The bringing in of Christian holy water is tantamount to acknowledging the inferiority of the Karanga sacred water.

It was also reported that some widows may offer just a few clothes belonging to their deceased husbands for the ritual of inheritance of personal belongings, and are likely to keep the rest for their sons. Some of the participants, particularly Sarah and Matthew, interpreted this behavior as a result of greed, individualism, and selfishness, which some postcolonial theorists allege were planted into Africans by some Christian missionaries who preached a heaven where one could go alone, without family. Furthermore, this individualism and selfishness was brought about by the introduction of the private ownership of land and other traditionally public properties, which was spearheaded by the colonialist.

To justify the withholding of some personal belonging of the deceased, some widows are believed to do it to prevent greedy family members from taking personal belongings at the expense of the children of the deceased. In the past, the acceptance of the personal belongings of the dead was tantamount to the acceptance of the responsibility to take care of his children.

Nowadays, some relatives may accept or even demand some of the personal belongings of the deceased without willing to assist in the raising children of the dead in any way.

There were reports of families that took all the household things when their married daughters died. Although it has always been the custom for the relatives of a deceased married woman to claim most of her personal belongings, they were expected to leave some things for the remaining children and son-in-law. In some cases, only symbolic items were taken since the deceased daughter would be replaced by another daughter, niece, or cousin. This phenomenon was known as *chimutsamapfihwa* (the one who revives the cooking). Here, the cooking refers to both the cooking of food, and sexual intimacy, which are disturbed by the death of a married woman, (Chitakure, 2016: 45). Even though the withholding of certain belongings of the deceased can, to a certain extent, be justified, it was noted that both sides can be blamed for the same greed and selfishness. There is nothing wrong with the distribution of the deceased's personal belongings to his or her relatives, but its abuses by either the widow, her relatives, or the relatives of the deceased is wrong.

It was also reported that many people were replacing the *masukafoshoro* ritual by a Christian ritual called *manyaradzo*. *Manyaradzo* is a ritual that is performed a few weeks after burial, and is intended to give fellow Christians an opportunity to empathize with the bereaved family, and to celebrate the life of the departed. What is surprising is that, in some cases, *manyaradzo* is performed even if the deceased was not a professed Christian, the reason being that the one who is being empathized with is not the deceased but the bereaved, who may be a Christian. Usually, *manyaradzo* involves a church service celebrated under the leadership of the pastor, where

participants sing, dance, and pray. Sometimes food is prepared, and soft drinks offered to the participants. Beer may not be brewed for the ritual depending on the congregational doctrines. The Christian *manyaradzo* are likely to exclude the grave diggers unless they are Christians themselves. So, the conception of cleansing both the gravediggers, and the tools used during the burial is lost. It is reasonable to argue that there is nothing wrong with *masukafoshoro*, and that the Karanga should be encouraged to perform it.

Mashopeshope is rarely performed because sometimes people would have been told of the cause of death by medical practitioners at the hospital. Although some families may perform the ritual a few days before *magadziro*, the consultation may be merely ceremonial because they already know what would have killed their relative. It was also reported that some families now consult the African Independent Churches “prophets” instead of traditional medical practitioners. Turner (1967: 92) has defined African Independent Churches as churches that were “founded in Africa by Africans and primarily for Africans.” Although this shift is a notable cultural change, at least, the “prophets” provide the same service that the traditional diviners provided. What is unfair is for the Christian “prophets” to demonize the diviners, as if the services that they provide are different from diviners’ services.

There are many families in Nyajena that were reported to have neglected the performance of *Magadziro*. In one of the villages where I conducted fieldwork, more than twenty qualified deceased people had not yet been initiated into ancestorhood. In most of those cases, there were no signs that the ritual was likely to be performed any time soon. Several reasons were given for this abandonment of the ritual in Nyajena. Some Karanga people have become Christians, and

are not allowed by their church doctrine to perform such rituals. According to Creary (2011: 222, 224), the ritual of *kurova guva (magadziro)* was “initially banned by Catholic missionaries shortly after their arrival in Southern Rhodesia in the early 1890s,” and was condemned by subsequent commissions as the worship of ancestors and violation of the first commandment. Christians expect their deceased to go to heaven, not to come back into the family as ancestors. What is surprising is that some Christians, such as Roman Catholics, believe in saints whose job is almost similar to that of ancestors.

In some cases, the deceased would have instructed his relatives not to perform the ritual because of his Christian beliefs. In addition to that, some Karanga people would like to perform *magadziro* but lack the funds to acquire the required sacrificial beast. Furthermore, some people are ignorant of the requirement for this ritual. They do not know why it should be performed. Moreover, some families have been overwhelmed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which in some cases, has killed all adult family members, leaving no one to perform the ritual.

Some participants claimed that there were consequences for not performing the *magadziro* ritual. They cited many inexplicable misfortunes, droughts, and family feuds faced by individuals and the community as a sign of the anger of ancestors. It was claimed that ancestors are angry because they have been neglected by their family members. Elsewhere Chitakure (2017: 96) has noted that ancestors become enraged if *kurova guva (magadziro)* is not performed. In one of the villages where the interviews for this study were conducted, one family, which had one of the deceased promoted into ancestorhood, was planning to have four more *magadziro* for the departed elders of the family. The leader of the family in reference, wanted to perform the ritual

for his father who had died recently, but could not perform the ritual for him alone because his grandmother (father's mother), who had died more than twenty years ago had not been made into an ancestor. According to tradition, the oldest deceased of the family must be made into an ancestor first. Hence, instead of performing *magadziro* for his father, he did it for his grandmother, which cleared his path to perform the ritual for his father and uncles.

What is surprising is the fact that, some of the people, who have abandoned their ancestors, are said to believe in Saints. One of the participants mentioned members of the Roman Catholic Church who believe in Saints, and yet refuse to honor their ancestors. Looking at it from postcolonial perspective, one is made to think that what the Karanga Catholics look for in Saints, they already have in ancestors. Saints are deceased people who are canonized by the Catholic Church and recognized as having lived exemplary lives that earned them a place in Heaven, and a responsibility to intercede for the living members of the church. Unlike the Saints, ancestors are the spirits of people who are personally known and closely related to their living family members. In fact, they are members of the family and are concerned about its welfare. Ancestors know the needs of each family member better than any other spirit.

The ritual of *kudarika vuta* has also significantly changed. One of the major changes concerning this ritual is that many widows now refuse to perform it. However, the refusal does not imply that the widow would have been unfaithful to her deceased husband, but is a sign of women's displeasure about the gender bias of the ritual because men are not required to perform the same ritual. In addition to that, nowadays the dead are not initiated into ancestorhood timely, if at all. Hence, it becomes unfair for the family of the deceased to expect the widow to remain chaste for

an indefinite number of years. As has been explained above, there was a reason for the Karanga to perform the ritual for women alone. Women are the mothers of any given nation; hence, their wellbeing and ritual cleanliness was safeguarded. It is also important to perform *magadziro* as soon as possible so that widows may not be required to be chaste for indefinite periods.

There have been significant changes to the wife inheritance ritual as well. Most families have abandoned this ritual mostly because of the fear of spreading contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Zimbabwe has suffered a great deal due to the pandemic. Since HIV/AIDS can be spread through sexual intercourse, if the husband dies of it, it is more likely that the widow is also infected. Of course, there are cases where only one partner is infected. The other reason for the unpopularity of this ritual concerns the independence and freedom that Shona women have experienced since Zimbabwe's attainment of independence in 1980. More women are now gainfully employed, so, they can take care of their children in the event of their husbands' demise. This abandonment of the *kugara nhaka* has brought both blessings and challenges to widows. One of the blessings is that they are free to find a husband anywhere else. The downside is that widows who are not gainfully employed, and cannot find another man to marry them, may find it difficult to find someone to cater for their emotional and financial needs. Mbugwa (2016: 104), writing from a different context bemoans the lack of arrangements for the care of the widow and her children in modern African families as was the case in the past. This lack of arrangement exposes the widow and her children to economic hardships. Although it is the responsibility of the remaining family members to take care of their brother's family, there is no single person pin-pointed to shoulder this responsibility unless the widow is inherited.

Another significant cultural change is in the inheritance of a married woman's estate. Holleman, (1952: 325) notes that the inheritance of a woman's property is left to the discretion of her own relatives. The husband's only responsibility is to show the in-laws all the property that belongs to the deceased wife. In the past, it is reported that the deceased wife's relatives were entitled to half of the food and other properties, and they would leave the rest to the son-in-law and his children. However, if there were any livestock, they would be taken by the relatives of the departed wife. But things have changed. Some relatives of the deceased may take everything, leaving the son-in-law with nothing. Some of the participants condemned such acts as a result of greed and selfishness that have overridden the Karanga's traditions and values. However, it is true that some of the Karanga rituals can be abused, but there is no practice, in any culture, that is immune to abuse. What is needed for any people, whose culture has been demonized, and almost discarded, is to reclaim its cultural practices for the sake of saving its cultural identity.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Post-burial rituals are crucial because without them the dying process is not complete. Those who decide against performing them properly, or at all, choose to upset and ostracize the invisible members of their families. According to Mbiti (1990: 158), the process of dying continues as long as there is someone who knew the "living dead," and would be completed "when the last person who knew him dies," and at this point, the "living-dead" loses personal immortality, and acquires collective immortality as a spirit. The refusal to perform post-burial rituals, particularly, *magadziro*, is an insult to the collective wisdom of the Karanga elders, and the ancestors. It is like choosing death for one's own family members, instead of life. It is

tantamount to committing murder of one's own family members. To deprive the deceased of becoming an ancestor is to condemn him to eternal darkness.

According to participants in this study, the most important of these rituals is the *magadziro*, which transforms the deceased into an ancestor. However, the interviewees maintained that all the post-burial rituals are important for the wellbeing of the deceased's remaining family members, and the community as a whole. These findings show that the rituals have profound significance to the Karanga people, whether they perform them or not. However, the encounter between the Karanga and Western cultures has brought about changes to the performances of these rituals. Some of the changes are inevitable and desirable, but others are a result of the Karanga cultures's never-ending demonization by colonialists. Unfortunately, the demonization of such rituals has been internalized by the Karanga to the extent that they perpetuate the condemnation of the rituals themselves. Yes, it is true that the Karanga, perhaps just like all other African peoples, need redemption from self-hate. They need salvation from a distorted image of themselves that they accepted from the colonialists. They should reaffirm their cultural identity, and run away from self-loathing. Suggestions of what they should do to reclaim their cultural identity and dignity will be dealt with in detail in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 6

KARANGA TRADITIONAL DEATH RITUALS MANUAL

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief manual of selected death rituals that are carried out from the time a Karanga person dies until the *magadziro* (making of an ancestor) ceremony is performed. Even though this chapter deals with numerous death rituals, it gives primary emphasis to *magadziro*. A manual is a series of clear, concise, and progressive instructions about how to perform a certain process—in this case, it concerns the performance of some selected Karanga death rituals according to the people of Nyajena's death ritual praxis. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with a step by step, pocketable, intelligible, and some practical information on how to perform selected important Karanga death rituals. All the information presented in this chapter is a logical synthesis of the field research findings done for this study. Although the praxis of rituals described here may be similar to what other scholars have observed elsewhere, this manual is composed out of the field data gathered for this study. The similarities render this manual usable by other African ethnicities if they find it applicable to their needs. However, it should be noted that this manual, like any other manual, may be of great help to people who already know something about the rituals dealt with. Novices in African traditional practices should first acquaint themselves with the details of the rituals before they can make sense out of this summarized manual.

6.2 WHAT IS A MANUAL?

According to Mason (1996: 26), one of the first and important things to do before writing a manual is to identify the readers, and make assumptions about their knowledge concerning the topic under scrutiny. In support of that, Lunemann (2001: 85) writes, “One of the areas most often overlooked in writing a manual is audience definition.” For Reddout (1987: 66), the specific names of the audience should be mentioned if it adds to the clarity of their identity. In the case of this study, the people of Nyajena in particular, and other Shona or African people in general are the audience. For a manual to make sense to its readers, the readers should have some prior, general knowledge about the task at hand. In this case, the audience should know something about the Karanga death rituals.

This manual assumes that the readers are Karanga ritual practitioners who already possess a working knowledge of the performance of all or some of the explored death rituals. It should be mentioned that this manual synthesizes what most of the practitioners already know about the subject. The question that arises at this juncture concerns the identity of ritual practitioners in African Traditional Religion. Some scholars argue that although there are ritual specialists in African Traditional Religion, it cannot be denied that almost everyone can be classified as a ritual practitioner. These ritual practitioners may include elders, midwives, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, nephews, healers, village heads, and so on.

Also, a good manual should include an introduction, which gives the readers a short overview concerning the task to be performed, together with the duration of performing that task, (Mason,

1996: 27–28). Manual instructions should have an introduction, which may include” four key elements,” namely; a complete explanation conscientizing the readers about the reason for performing the procedure, and the results of not performing the task, a list of supplies, common mistakes that may happen, and instructing them on how to fix the appearances of undesired outcomes, (Mason, 1996: 28).

In addition to the above sentiments, Mason (1996: 28) contends that, another significant step in the composition of a manual is to use clear, logical, short sentences, and simple words for the reader’s easy understanding of the instructions. The use of technical jargon should be avoided because it is likely to confuse the readers or users. When people consult a manual for information on how to perform a particular task, their main objective is not to read or master detailed processes, but to read the minimal information that enables them to perform the task at hand. In affirmation of the same point, Fitzgerald (2007: 17) encourages the author to stay focused on the topic and to use coherent language. In other words, the steps to be performed should follow each other coherently to avoid misunderstandings. Although a total avoidance of the use of technical terms can be difficult if they are the names of the process to be performed, pictorial diagrams may be used for the readers to understand what is being referred to. However, in the case of this manual on Karanga death rituals, pictorial diagrams will not be used, but every effort will be made to use clear and intelligible language.

Furthermore, Reddout (1987: 66) encourages the use of the personal pronoun “you” throughout the manual. He (1996: 67–68) claims that the pronoun “you” creates rapport between the reader and the writer by involving the reader personally. It is also believed to give more clarity to the

technical ideas involved. The use of “you” is likely to convince the user or reader that the instructions were composed specifically for him or her, for the purpose of assisting him or her to understand and perform the procedure. In addition to the use of the personal pronoun “you,” Reddout (1987: 66) recommends the use of words such as “should” to suggest an action, “must,” for recommending an action, and “shall,” when requiring that an action should be used. This manual will use the second person pronoun “you,” and some of the suggested words, wherever applicable, and in pursuit of adding clarity to the instructions.

Last, when the instructions are finally written, Callison and Donna (1999: 331) encourage the writer to ask other people to read the instructions to identify deficiencies and errors, which may be difficult for the writer to identify because of familiarity. Callison and Donna (1999: 331) postulate that it does not take an outsider a long time to identify errors in a manual. Although this step should be done when the manual is already composed, it is important because it allows the writer to make necessary or recommended corrections to the manual before users can use it. Unless the mistakes are identified and corrected, the readers may not understand how to perform the required procedure smoothly.

In a nutshell, this manual has five elements, namely; the identification of the ritual, an introduction, a list of items or supplies that are needed for the ritual; the use of short, clear, and logical language, and of the personal pronoun “you” whenever necessary. This manual deals with the last rites or death rituals.

6.3 LAST RITES

In this manual, last rites or pre-burial rituals refer to all the rituals that are performed as soon as the ill person dies, up to the time his corpse is taken outside of his home for burial. These rites include, closing the eyes and mouth, folding the hands of the deceased, and washing and dressing of the body. Usually, these rituals are performed by the person caring for the dying person, or the closest family member who is available at the time of death. If there was no one to perform some of these rites at the time of death, the rituals can still be performed later. Consequently, it is recommended that the dying patient should never be left alone. Although this watching of the dying patient is intended to give him company, which he desperately needs at this final moment of his life, and to minimize his fears of being abandoned, it is also intended for the availability of a family member to perform these last rites. Most of the participants in this study emphasized the importance of having the dying person watched, day and night.

There are several signs that may herald the impending death of the ill person, such as the loss of sensation, motion, and reflexes, the arms and legs of the patient becoming cool because of low circulation of blood, confusion of time and place, loss of control of bowel and urine movement, restlessness, irregular breathing, (Sankar, 1991: 150–151). Once death is assumed to have occurred, the person present should check if it has actually happened by examining if the patient has ceased breathing, her heartbeat has stopped, her eyelids have involuntarily opened, her eyes have become fixed at a certain spot, and her jaws have involuntarily relaxed, which forces the mouth to open slightly, (Sankar, 1991: 151). In the rural setup, the above symptoms may mean that someone has died. However, in most Western health caregiving institutions, appropriate and

relevant technology is used to verify the occurrence of death. The following instructions are for caregivers or persons in charge of the dying person, who is being cared for at home, where modern technology may not be available. In the home environment, these rituals should be performed as soon as the occurrence of death has been ascertained.

AUDIENCE: Health caregivers, people present at the time of death, family ritual leaders.

SUPPLIES: Water, towel, soap, dish or bucket, body ointment (vaseline), handkerchief, clean clothes, blanket, pillow.

6.3.1 As soon as death occurs, you should check if the deceased has involuntarily lost control of bowels or bladder during the process of dying. If he has done so, you must immediately remove the soiled garments or cloths, clean the back of the deceased, and replace the wet or soiled clothes or blankets with clean ones. If this initial cleaning is not done immediately, the odor would fill the house. This initial cleaning of the deceased may not be ritualistic, but hygienic.

6.3.2 You should move the body of the deceased to make it lie on its back so that you can close the deceased's mouth and eyes properly.

6.3.3 You must close the deceased's eyes and mouth if they are open, and you should check them regularly for a couple of hours after the occurrence of death. If the deceased has been dead for a couple of hours, and the body is already stiff (*rigor mortis*), you should use some warm water and a towel to relax the muscles. You should then use a towel or handkerchief to tie the top of the head and the chin together until the mouth no longer opens involuntarily. If the departed's eyes are open, you should use the same wet and warm towel to relax the eyelids. You may place

a coin on the closed eyes to keep the eyelids in place. Care should be taken not to allow the eyeballs falling into the eye sockets.

6.3.4 You should fold the hands of the deceased by placing one palm on top of the other, or by stretching each hand along the sides of the body.

6.3.5 The people responsible for the ritual washing of the corpse should do so as soon as possible. They should use a wet towel with soap to clean the following: face, mouth, (if fluids are coming out), armpits, and private parts. The whole body may need to be cleaned with the wet towel and soap as well. Do not throw away the remaining dirty water and towel. The towel, water, and bucket used for bathing the corpse may be placed in the grave during burial. You should make sure that the towel is torn a little, and the bucket or dish has holes drilled into it before placing them into the grave.

6.3.6 Apply body lotion to the corpse, and comb its hair if need be.

6.3.7 Dress the body in clean clothes, if there are no new clothes that have been purchased for that purpose. After you dress the body, you should bring back the hands to the desired position.

6.3.8 Things to Remember

If the caregiver is not the appropriate person to perform the last rites, she should call the closest family member of the deceased as soon as she becomes aware of the occurrence of death. If the one who is supposed to perform these rituals is afraid to do so, she should wait for the senior members of the family to arrive and request them to perform the rituals.

6.4 BURIAL OF BABIES AND FETUSES

Among the Karanga of Nyajena, babies that are born prematurely (stillbirths) or die before they cut their first teeth receive a special burial, which is different from the burial given to adults. The rituals surrounding the burial of such babies are crucial because if not performed properly, the spirit of the deceased baby may make its mother barren or may bring misfortunes to the entire community. You should perform the burial early in the morning when it is still cool. Only women who have gone past childbearing ages (menopause) should take part in the burial. The shallow grave must be dug along the riverbanks or swampy areas.

AUDIENCE: Senior women who have gone past childbearing ages, men.

SUPPLIES: Hoe, pick, cloths or small blanket, and broken clay pot (*gambe*).

6.4.1 There should not be any public mourning rituals such as crying, *kubata mavoko*, or *chema*.

6.4.2 Relatives should be notified about the death, and if they come for the funeral, they should not talk about the death directly.

6.4.3 Only old men should choose a stream, river, or swampy area where they want to bury the baby. They should also assist in the digging of the shallow grave. If the grave is dug in the river, it should not be in the middle of the river, but its banks.

6.4.4 When the grave is complete, the older women should be notified, and they should put the baby in a cracked clay pot (*gambe*) (if it is premature), or just wrap the baby in a thin cloth or blanket (if born alive).

6.4.5 Early in the morning, the older women should bury the baby in the shallow grave along the riverbanks.

6.4.6 If the deceased baby is a girl, she should be laid on her right-hand side, and if a boy, on his left-hand side (the natural sides men and women use when being intimate).

6.4.7 As soon as the burial is done, the women should go back home, and join the rest of the family, who are just sitting and talking with each other. Even though everyone knows why they are gathered, it is forbidden to refer to the fetal or baby demise directly. This taboo is observed to let the spirit of the deceased baby know that it is not welcome back into the family.

6.4.8 Things to Remember

You should not mourn or perform normal burial rituals because the baby may come back again to deceive the parents. The mother should not attend the burial because she may become barren. Women who have not reached menopause should not attend the burial but may stay at home accompanying the bereaved mother. You should never bury the baby on dry land because the spirit of the baby may become aggravated, and would come back to punish the mother or the whole community with some kind of calamity.

6.5 BURIAL OF AN UNMARRIED MAN OR WOMAN

When an unmarried man dies, efforts should be made to find out if he ever fathered a kid outside wedlock. If none of the family members knows of any such a kid, then the departed is considered to have died single and childless. As for a deceased woman, it is easier to find out if she ever had a kid or not. Definitely, someone would know if she ever mothered a kid. Once the lack of

paternity or maternity is proved beyond any reasonable doubt, the burial proceedings should begin. Most rituals that are performed should be similar to those of a married adult. What is outlined below are the extra rituals that should be done in addition to the usual ones.

AUDIENCE: Ritual leaders, all other people

SUPPLIES: Rat, mortar, pestle, maize cob (*guri*), and all the supplies required when burial an adult person.

6.5.1 Once the corpse has been washed, you should find a rat, that would be inserted into the anus of the corpse. *Ruredzo* (slippery plant) maybe used to enable the rodent to get into the deceased's back.

6.5.2 If you do not find a rat, *duri* or *musi* (mortar or pestle) depending on the sex of the deceased, should be taken to the grave, and placed by the side of the corpse.

6.5.3 As this ritual is being performed, a prayer should be said by the ritual practitioner. The words maybe uttered audibly or silently. "My son or daughter or (whatever the case might be), you have died, and you have not left any family. No children, and no wife (husband). There is no reason for you to come back home as an ancestor because you have no one to look after. There is no offspring to perform the *magadziro* ritual for you. Please, go for good. Do not come back. This is your wife and children (pointing at the *duri* (mortar), *musi* (pestle), or rat). Please, go, and never come back. We do not want you to come back."

6.5.4 You should not perform *magadziro* and inheritance ceremonies for such a man or woman. However, his or her personal belongings and estate should be distributed in the normal way.

6.5.5 Things to Remember

You should note that all other rituals apart from the few described above in this section, should be similar to the ones performed when a married person dies. The Karanga fear that if an unmarried person is allowed to come back into the family home, his spirit may demand a wife or haunt other people's wives or husbands. In addition to that, since the deceased has not left any children, he has no one to perform *magadziro* for him or her.

6.6 MARKING THE GRAVE

This is one of the most important rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena, which should be performed by a close relative of the deceased. If a man has died, his father or brother should perform the ritual. If a woman has died, her own father or brother, or their representative should mark the grave. The ritual is performed early in the morning, in the presence of family members and gravediggers. It marks the beginning of gravedigging.

AUDIENCE: Everyone.

SUPPLIES: Hoe, pick, shovel.

6.6.1 The family representative, in the company of family members, should go to the place, which has been selected to bury the deceased. Families that have family cemeteries are likely to use them to bury their deceased family members.

6.6.2 The family leader, with the help of close family members, in the presence of gravediggers, should select the spot where the grave should be dug.

6.6.3 The one marking the grave should use a pick or hoe to make three or more strokes into the soil while praying. The digging is symbolic.

6.6.4. He or she should say, “This is the place where we are making you a new home, or this is where we are going to lay you to rest.”

6.6.5 After this symbolic digging, the grave diggers may begin the digging of the grave.

6.6.6 Things to Remember

This ritual should be performed by a close family member, who is authorized to perform it. In some cases, you can delegate younger family members to perform the ritual on your behalf. If a person dies and is buried in a foreign land, far away from his relatives, anyone who is related to him by totem or in any other remote way may perform the ritual. If the deceased is a woman, only members of her family of origin should perform the ritual. Her husband or children should not mark the grave unless all her family members cannot be located. In that case, her oldest child may be asked to perform the ritual.

6.7 BURIAL OF A WOMAN OR MAN WHO BORE CHILDREN

The Karanga burial of a person who would have been married, or who has given birth to or sired children is elaborate. The Karanga of Nyajena believe that the spirit of such a person will become an ancestor. Everything should be done with extreme caution, lest the spirit of the deceased is upset. These rituals start with taking the corpse outside the room where it was being prepared for burial.

AUDIENCE: Ritual leaders, mourners.

SUPPLIES: Coffin, bier, pick, shovels, water, stones, blanket.

6.7.1 You should tell the deceased that you are taking him to his final resting place. The following prayer may be used: “We are now taking you to your resting place.”

6.7.2 The nephews or sons-in-law should lift the coffin or bier and place it outside of the hut, but closer to the doorway.

6.7.3 The leader should invite people to bid their farewell to the deceased, starting with the most senior members of the family. One at a time, they approach the open coffin, and gaze at the face of the deceased. They are free to remain silent, bow a little, or say a few words silently.

6.7.4 The coffin bearers should lift up the coffin, and walk around the hut in which the corpse was kept. If the deceased is a man, you should do it in a clockwise direction, and if a woman, you should do it in an anti-clockwise direction.

6.7.5 Daughters-in-law should walk in front of the coffin bearers with indigenous brooms in their hands. They may sweep the spot on which the coffin would be placed during resting. The men carrying the coffin should follow the daughters-in-law, while carrying the coffin with the side where the head of the deceased is located facing the home, and the legs side facing the gravesite.

6.7.6 The body should be rested two times before reaching the grave, and for the third time, when the mourners reach the grave. When resting the body, the coffin bearers should place the coffin on the ground for about two minutes, while the rest of the mourners are clapping hands and ululating. The same should be repeated at the second stop.

6.7.7 After the second resting, the coffin side where the deceased’s head is located should now face towards the grave. Upon reaching the grave, the coffin should be placed close to the grave.

6.7.8 Speeches may be given at this time. Only selected people should give short speeches.

6.7.9 The sons-in-law and nephews should now place the body into the grave, which is then closed with flat rocks separating the rest of the pit from the coffin compartment.

6.7.10 The people who have not done manual work in the preparation of the grave should pinch a little soil and throw it into the grave, while praying as follows: “I am X, your son. Have a safe journey, my father,” or whatever the relationship might be. This ritual should also be done on behalf of those family members who are not present at this time. Parents can perform this ritual for their absent children.

6.7.11 When the grave is halfway filled with soil, the remainder of the water used to bath the corpse, and the towel and bucket or dish that would have been used in the bathing of the deceased should be placed into the grave. You should make sure that the towel is slightly torn, and the bucket or dish has holes drilled into it. If a tree bark bier (*bwanyanza*) would have been used, it also should be destroyed before throwing it into the grave. A shirt or pair of trousers of the deceased selected for this purpose should also be torn apart not more than halfway and placed into the grave at this point.

6.7.12 The rest of the people may quickly fill the grave with the soil using shovels. At any point during the covering of the grave with soil until it is completely done, there should be at least one person shoveling soil into the grave.

6.7.13 Once all the soil from the grave has been put back onto the grave, mourners should be instructed to bring stones to the grave. You should line the stones on top of the grave. You must instruct the people responsible for carrying the stones to bring one stone at a time. Women should assist in bringing the stones to the grave. If a scotch cart or wheelbarrow has been used to carry stones in large quantities from where they are available to the grave, all the stones should

be offloaded at least several meters from the grave, from where the people can bring them to the grave one by one.

6.7.14 After the mount of the grave is completely lined with stones, the daughters-in-law should sweep the area around the grave while going backwards so that no footprints are left on the ground.

6.7.15 Gravediggers should wash their hands, and the remainder of the water should be sprinkled on the swept ground.

6.7.16 All may go home now where the village head will announce the resting days (*mahakurimwi*). Also, the family may announce the date for the *masukafoshoro* or *manyaradzo*.

6.7.17 If the mourners have not had their meal, you should give them food at this point. You should make sure that the women who serve the food to the mourner must carry a plate of food at a time.

6.7.18 Things to Remember.

Burial should not be done between 12 noon and 1:00 pm. Children should not be compelled to view the body if they do not feel comfortable in doing it. In fact, in the past, the Karanga did not allow small children and pregnant women to attend the burial for fear of attacks by the evil spirits. The spouse of the deceased is not expected to give a speech. The women who serve the food at the funeral should bring one plate at a time. It should be borne in mind that mourners should carry only one article at a time during and immediately after the burial.

6.8 HOW TO PERFORM *MAGADZIRO*

This ritual is very important and should be performed for the departed who qualify or are not disqualified. One should have been married, sired, or given birth to offspring, and should not have died of any disqualifying disease such as leprosy, tuberculosis, and so on. Ordinarily, it is performed by one's children or grandchildren, at least six months after the burial. Other Shona groups perform the same ritual at least, one year after the burial. This ritual makes an ancestor by bringing his or her spirit from the grave into the family home. In other words, *magadziro* reincorporates the deceased back into the family as its newest invisible member. No one can become an ancestor unless this ritual has been performed. Hence, senior ancestors of the family and the spirit of the uninitiated deceased are very much aggrieved if the children of the dead person deliberately refuse to perform the ritual. This ancestral anger may bring misfortunes to those who are neglecting the performance of *magadziro*, also known as *kurova guva*.

AUDIENCE: Everyone

SUPPLIES: Finger millet (*rukweza*), big traditional clay containers (*makate*), one male or female goat (*mbudzi*) depending on the gender of the deceased, one cow or bull, depending on the gender of the deceased, water, clay pots (*hari*), axe (*demo*), drums (*ngoma*), firewood, drums, jingles, knife, maize meal, cups.

6.8.1 You should notify all the family members and relatives of your intention to perform *magadziro* on time. If the departed is a woman, her family of origin must be notified, and their permission solicited for because they are the ones who would officiate at the ritual.

6.8.2 Contributions of grain and money may be made to the person responsible for the ritual.

6.8.3 A few weeks before the ritual, you and the closest family members should visit a diviner to enquire about the process of the ritual, and to have the ritual practitioner appointed.

6.8.4 You should encourage people to gather at the place of the ritual on the eve of the ritual.

6.8.5 Early in the morning, a delegate of close family members and the deceased's nephew, if the deceased is man, or grandson, if the deceased is a woman, should go to the grave of the deceased. The delegation should include women who can sing and ululate, and men who can dance, sing, play the drums, and whistle.

6.8.6 The delegates should take to the grave a small clay pot of beer (*pfuko*), a ground snuff container (*chibako chefodya yemhino*), and an axe (*demo*).

6.8.7 As the procession nears the burial place of the departed, they may sing, dance, and ululate.

6.8.8 Upon arrival at the grave, the nephew should cut a medium sized branch of *mupembere* tree, and bring it to the grave. The delegates should kneel around the grave, with the leader kneeling closer to the headstone.

6.8.9 The delegates should clap their hands reverently, and the women should ululate. You should then draw out some beer from the *pfuko* using *mukombe*, and present it to the spirit of the deceased saying the following prayer: "X, we have come to take you home. You cannot live in the bush any longer. Here is your drink to quench your thirst." You then pour some beer on the grave. Draw out some more beer, and take a sip, and then do the same for all the delegates.

6.8.10 Again, you should pour some ground tobacco into your left palm, and talk to the spirit of the departed. "Here, is your tobacco." You then put it on the grave. It is advisable to take a pinch of the ground tobacco, and sniff it before placing it on the grave. There should be more clapping of hands, ululating, drumming, and dancing.

6.8.11 The nephew should pull the *mupembere* branch around the grave in a clockwise direction if the deceased is a man, and in an anti-clockwise direction if she is a woman. As the nephew is doing this, the leader should beg the spirit of the dead to jump onto the branch for a ride home. The nephew momentarily places the branch on top of the grave. The leader should notify the deceased of the trip home. “X, ride on this branch. We are taking you home.” There should be more ululating, dancing, singing, whistling, and drumming.

6.8.12 On the way back home, the nephew should lead the way, while pulling the branch. He should never look backwards until he enters the sacred hut (round kitchen). The procession should be done amid much jubilation, dancing, drumming, and singing. Upon arrival at home, other people should join in the celebration.

6.8.13 The nephew should pull the branch right into the sacred hut (round kitchen), and put it in the inside of the hut’s roof where it will remain until a ritual to remove it has been performed, and the nephew paid for this job, and also for other duties such as the *rukanda* business.

6.8.14 The goat of emotion (*mbudzi yeshungu*) should be brought to the threshold, and the nephew should hold it by the front leg. For a woman, the grandson should hold it by the right leg, and for a man, by the left leg. The nephew should be sitting inside the sacred hut, while the goat is standing with its head inside the hut, and its whole body outside.

6.8.15 You should then invite the close family members who are gathered outside the hut, starting with the most senior, to pour beer on the back of the goat while introducing themselves to the ancestor. “I am X, your grandfather,” or whatever the relationship might be. “If you are happy with this ritual, please, show us.”

6.8.16 This ritual should be repeated until the goat shakes its body. This shaking is interpreted as the acceptance of the ritual by the spirit of the dead. From now on, the spirit has become an official ancestor of the family. This ritual can be performed by proxy.

6.8.17 The ritual may be repeated until the goat shakes its body. If it does not shake its body, it is believed that the ritual would have been rejected, and another one would be performed in the future after rectifying the issue that would have angered the ancestor.

6.8.18 You should slaughter the goat, and its meat should be roasted and eaten without salt. Adding salt to the sacred meal invalidates the ritual. Its head, legs, hooves, skin, and bones should be burnt in the fire.

6.8.19 At this point, beer may be given to the people who should be seated according to their villages.

6.8.20 As soon as the goat meat is all consumed, you should lead a delegation to the cattle kraal, and present the sacrificial beast to the ancestor and the people. Once this is done, the sons-in-law and nephews should slaughter it.

6.8.21 Once the beast has been skinned, and its parts separated, you should cut a few pieces from all organs except from the head and legs of the beast, and place them into a clay pot. This meat should be cooked without salt, and it will be the sacred meal for close family members. All the other meat should be cooked separately.

6.8.22 If the ancestor is a man, the nephew should use his knife to cut a skin bangle (*rukanda*) from the left leg of the front leg of the beast, while making sure that it comes out as a circle. He should slide it into the left arm of the oldest son of the ancestor. This son should be the one who would inherit the name and estate of the deceased.

6.8.23 The sacrificial meat, and *sadza* (thick porridge from finger millet) should be cooked by a woman who has reached menopause. When the meal is ready, you should bring both the *sadza* and meat to the threshold, and all family members should sit outside facing the doorway of the sacred hut. You should take a lump of *sadza* and a piece of meat by your right hand, and give it to the members of the family gathered. Once every member has received and consumed his or her share, the nephews may snatch away the remaining meat and run away into the nearby bush to consume it. They are considered hyenas, and are allowed to steal this meat and some beer. This is one of the ways to compensate them for their ritual duties.

6.8.24 You should give more beer, and food to the people at this point. Dancing and singing should continue until evening. The distant relatives and other villagers may depart at the end of the day, but close relatives should remain for more rituals on the next day.

6.8.25 Things to Remember

Magadziro is a make or break ritual. Everything should be carried out meticulously. If you have any question, do not hesitate to ask any of the elders present even if they are not close members of your family. There are variations to the performance of this ritual depending on each family and the gender of the deceased. In any case, special attention should be given to what the elders of the family say.

6.9 INHERITANCE CEREMONIES

Among the Karanga or Shona people, there are several post-burial rites, which deal with inheritance (*kugova* or *kugara nhaka*). These include, the rites concerning the inheritance of the deceased's name (*zita*), personal belongings (*nhumbi*), wives (*vakadzi*), and estate (*pfuma*).

AUDIENCE: Family ritual leaders/ nephews/grandsons.

SUPPLIES: Reed mat (*rupasa*), money, plate, blanket or cloths, drums, water, dish, towel, deceased's weapon (axe, gun, bow and arrow, and so on).

6.9.1 Inheritance of the Deceased's Name

This ritual is performed on the morrow of *magadziro* ceremony. It is performed for both men and women. If the ancestor is a man, his name is given to his oldest son. If the deceased is a woman, her name is given to any of her granddaughters or nieces (daughter of her brother). The son, who inherits his father's name, also assumes other responsibilities in the family.

6.9.1.1 You should spread the reed mat so that the one inheriting the name sits on it. Cover him with a big cloth or blanket. Do not suffocate him. All other family members should gather around him or her.

6.9.1.2 You should kneel and talk to the ancestor. "Today, we are giving your name to your son, X. Protect him from all harm. Inspire him to do what is right. Help him to take care of his mother and the siblings." Then you then pour some ground tobacco onto the soil. The family members gathered should clap hands, sing, and ululate.

6.9.1.3 You should also address the one who has inherited the name. “Now you have inherited your fathers’ name. You also should assume the responsibilities that your father had. Take care of your siblings and mother (if she is not inherited). Pay back his debts.”

6.9.1.4 You then uncover the name-inheritor, and invite the people to offer their gifts. You should provide a plate for the monetary gifts.

6.9.1.5 The people gathered should celebrate and congratulate the name-inheritor amid much pomp and fanfare.

6.9.1.6 Things to Remember

Sometimes, the person inheriting the name, is already named after the deceased. In such a case, this ritual is performed as if the inheritor is getting the name for the first time. There are cases where the younger son or a cousin has the name of the deceased already. In such circumstances, the name should be given to the oldest son of the deceased even if his younger brother already bears the name. This name inheritance is more about shouldering responsibilities left by the deceased father than just getting a name. In the case of a deceased woman, if one of the granddaughters or nieces already has her name, she should be the name inheritor. It should be remembered that the ritual name inheritor does not need to officially change his or her name to that of the deceased unless it is already his or her birth and official name.

6.9.2 Inheritance of the Deceased’s Personal Belonging

This ritual can be carried out a couple of days or months after burial. It is important to carry out the ritual as soon as possible because the deceased’s personal belongings may be defiled if they remain unpurified for a longer time. If the deceased is a married woman, her own people should

be encouraged to perform the ritual on the day following the burial, unless if they arrange to do it on a later date. You should remember that the deceased woman's children and husband are not considered her relatives in terms of death rituals.

AUDIENCE: Ritual leaders.

SUPPLIES: Small branch of *muzeze* tree tied into a bundle, leaves of *chifumoro*, a dish of medicated water, personal belongings of the deceased (excluding livestock), reed mat, axe, bow and arrow, gun, knobkerrie, immovable properties, wives.

6.9.2.1 You should gather all the close family members at the home of the departed, and explain to them the purpose of the gathering.

6.9.2.2 Mix the water in the dish with pounded *chifumuro* leaves.

6.9.2.3 Dip your hands into the medicated water, and touch the items (*kubata nhumbi*) that have been brought outside, and placed on the reed mat.

6.9.2.3 When you have touched each of the belongings, you should use the bundle of *muzeze* leaves to sprinkle the medicated water onto the people gathered.

6.9.2.4 Once the personal belongings have been handled, and the people sprinkled with the medicated water, you should distribute them among the family members of the deceased, making sure that the wishes of the departed are respected, and all the qualified family members benefit.

6.9.2.5 If the deceased is a woman, her own people should take charge of the distribution of personal belongings. Traditionally, they are supposed to acquire half of her personal belongings. These include pots, plates, stoves, clothes, blankets, and so on. However, about half of them

should be left for the husband and the children. All her cows, underwear, *chinu* (body ointment container), and waist beads (*chuma*), should be given to her family of origin.

6.9.2.6 Things to Remember

At this ritual, no one should refuse to take what is offered to her or him. However, the recipient may pass item on to a more deserving family member after first accepting it. It is morally and culturally evil for the family of a deceased woman to take all the personal belongings of their relative without leaving some for the children and husband of the dead.

6.9.3 The Inheritance of the Widows

This ritual should be carried out a day after the *magadziro* ceremony. Until then, all the widows are supposed to remain chaste in honor of the deceased husband. It should be carried out in the morning. All family members of the deceased man, and of the widows should be invited. At this ceremony, each widow should choose a man to inherit her among the qualifying candidates, but only after having jumped the weapon (*kudarika vuta*) of the deceased. So, there are two rituals that run concurrently. The qualifying members are brothers, nephews, and sons of the dead man. The man chosen, if a brother, nephew, or son (of one of the senior wives) of the deceased man, immediately assumes the responsibility over the widow's economic and conjugal needs. He always takes care of the deceased's children, and may sire more children on behalf of the deceased relative. If the chosen man is the son of the deceased and of the widow being inherited, he assumes economic care of his mother and siblings only.

AUDIENCE: Family ritual leaders, family members.

SUPPLIES: A dish of warm water, towel, reed mat, weapon of the deceased (axe, gun, bow and arrow).

6.9.3.1 You should make all the family members gather outside the round hut in which the other rituals associated with the ancestor were performed, about four meters from the doorway.

6.9.3.2 Place the weapon of the deceased husband across the doorway, about two meters from the door. This weapon should have been washed by the *muzukuru* on the previous day, and stored in a granary. This is called *kusuka vuta*.

6.9.3.3 You should invite the widow or widows to jump over the weapon into the hut, and again when getting out of the hut, starting with the most senior widow. You should let the widows know that whoever was unfaithful to the deceased husband from the time of the burial to this day, should not jump over the weapon, and if she does, she may fall over the weapon or get infected by some mysterious disease.

6.9.3.4 The widow may perform the ritual silently, or may utter the following words, “*Murume wangu, handina chakaipa chandakabata,*” (My husband, I have been faithful to you).

6.9.3.5 There should be ululation, clapping of hands, and rejoicing for the successful jumping of the weapon. If any of the widows refuses to perform the ritual, her relatives have to pay a fine, usually, a cow, to the relatives of the husband.

6.9.3.6 As soon as *kudarika vuta* has been done, the qualifying men should sit on the reed mat in a circle with the widow kneeling inside the circle, while holding a dish of water and a towel.

6.9.3.7 You should instruct her to offer the water to the man who she would like to inherit her.

6.9.3.8 After the chosen inheritor has washed his hands, the widow has wiped his hands with the towel in her arms, people gathered should ululate. The washing of hands signifies the acceptance of the widow.

6.9.3.9 The same is repeated until all the widows have performed the ritual.

6.9.3.10 Things to Remember

Any qualifying man chosen should not refuse to wash his hands as a sign of accepting responsibilities over the widow and her children. You should let the widows know that if they no longer want a sexual relationship, they should choose their oldest son. He would care for all the widow's needs except conjugal. But if she chooses to go this way, she should remain chaste all her life as long as she lives in the home of the deceased.

6.9.4 Inheritance of the Estate

In Nyajena, estate refers to the land, cattle, houses, businesses, and other immovable properties of the deceased. In the traditional Karanga society, the oldest son was earmarked to inherit the estate of the departed father. But this inheritance had responsibilities attached to it. For instance, he would pay off all of his deceased father's debts, and support his mother and his siblings, financially. Technically, he would act as if he were the father of the family. However, some fathers would leave a verbal or written will with details of how their estate is to be distributed. If the deceased is a woman, her family of origin must inherit her estate. This ritual can be performed on the same day the deceased's personal belongings are distributed.

AUDIENCE: Family ritual leaders.

SUPPLIES: Weapons of the deceased father (gun, bow and arrow, axe).

6.9.4.1 You should instruct the family members to gather early in the morning.

6.9.4.2 If there is a written will, you should produce it, after consultation with the family members of the departed.

6.9.4.3 You should distribute the estate following the will or as per the agreement with the family members.

6.9.4.4 Technically, all the cattle should remain in the widow's home, although the eldest son is responsible for their care.

6.9.4.5 In situations where the father would have distributed some of his cattle to all his sons before death, the family leader should follow the wishes of the deceased. However, he should always make sure that the widow and young children will be cared for.

6.9.4.6 You should distribute businesses, if any, accordingly. The land remains in the hands of the widow.

6.9.4.7 Things to Remember

The wishes of the widow should be respected. Nowadays, the inheriting son is just symbolic because the widow inherits almost everything. You should make sure that you distribute the estate according to the modern laws of Zimbabwe. All legal documents concerning the occurrence of death, and the transfer of ownership of properties should be followed meticulously. If the deceased would have died at home, an affidavit from the village head,

sometimes signed by two witnesses should be shown to the government department in charge of the registrations of births and deaths.

6.10 CONCLUSION

It should be noted that this manual does not deal with all the death rituals of the Karanga of Nyajena, and the omission of some does not mean that such rituals are not important, but it is because of the limitedness of space and time. Also, although these rituals are common in Nyajena, each family may have a slightly different variation of the ritual. However, despite these slight variations, the crux of the rituals is similar. For instance, the prayers are not standardized because they are not in written form. Hence, this manual should be used with prudence, and in consultation with the ritual practitioners of the family in question. Where this manual and the wisdom of the elders of the community differ, please, follow the direction of the elders. Be that as it may, this manual gives an important framework within which to perform the explored rituals. It can safely be used as a resource, where the ritual leaders are not certain as to the procedure to be followed.

CHAPTER 7

GENERAL CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a synopsis of chapters 1–6, and offers recommendations concerning how and why the Karanga of Nyajena should reclaim and affirm their cultural identity, particularly their traditional death rituals. However, the chapter acknowledges that some of the Karanga death rituals have been transformed because of their encounter with other cultures. In such cases, the chapter encourages the Karanga of Nyajena to be prudent in choosing whether to go back to their traditional rituals or to stick with the hybrid rituals while using either to their own advantage. Whatever they choose to do, it is imperative that they should know the praxis and significance of their traditional and modern death rituals, and should record them for posterity.

7.2 THE OVERALL PICTURE

This study was about death rituals as they are performed by the Karanga of Nyajena. However, since the Karanga of Nyajena are an ethnicity within the larger Shona ethnical group, who are also African, most of the explored rituals are also practiced by most Shona and African peoples. In most instances, what has been said about the Karanga of Nyajena, may be equally true about other Shona or African ethnicities. However, it should be admitted that there are also many

ethnic variations concerning both the praxis and significance of some of the death rituals across Africa. Mbiti (1975: 8) rightly emphasizes that point when he writes, “Each African people has its own heritage. Some aspects of our cultures are fairly similar over large areas of our continent. There are also many differences, which add to the variety of African culture in general.”

The Karanga death rituals that were explored in chapters 2 to 6 were classified into three major themes, namely, pre-burial rituals, burial rituals, and post-burial rituals. Pre-burial rituals included all the rituals performed as soon as a person dies, until his body is prepared and taken out of the house for burial. Burial rituals refer to all the rituals that are performed during the actual burial of the deceased, up to the time the mourners leave the grave after burial. Post-burial rituals explored the rituals, which are performed intermittently after burial, and may continue to be performed for several years after burial. But, since most natural deaths are preceded by some kind of illness, or are attributed to certain mysterious or spiritual forces, this study briefly explored the causes of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena. Of all the different causes of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena, it was noted that the most dreaded are witchcraft and the avenging spirit (*ngozi*).

The study had three fundamental objectives. First, it sought to describe the death rituals as they were or are performed by the Karanga of Nyajena both in the past and present. The second objective was to explore the significances of these rituals, then and now. The third objective was to identify the changes that may have happened to these rituals, for the purpose of affirming the positive transformations, and pointing out, and in some cases, challenging unhelpful changes. The overall goal of the study, which can also be seen as the fourth objective of the study, was to

produce a brief manual on Karanga death rituals as they are practiced by the Karanga of Nyajena. The manual was intended to guide the people who would want to bury their dead in the traditional way but may fully rely on oral tradition because of the unavailability of written guidelines. Of course, there is nothing wrong with oral tradition as a source of history. In fact, some historians of religion emphatically support the use of oral traditions in indigenous religions. Smith (1958: 368) has pointed out that the spoken word is more versatile and flexible than the written word, for it aids the human memory. However, Bourdillon (1987: 4–5) begs to differ when he asserts that orality has its own challenges such as being recounted only to serve a specific purpose, its exposure to manipulation to suit a certain purpose, and its “telescopic tendency.” Hence, the writing of a manual, though not intended to replace orality but to complement it, may be of great help to aid the people’s memory or even preserve the integrity of the rituals in the face of cultural changes brought about by acculturation and other agents.

The investigation utilized qualitative research designs, particularly ethnography, in the collection and interpretation of the relevant research data, in pursuit of the objectives, which have been mentioned above. Ethnography was the research design of choice for this study despite some foreseen time constraints that would limit the utilization of some of its aspects such as participant observation. Interviews were mainly used to gather the necessary data. In addition to interviews, participant observation was also employed, although a limited number of rituals could be observed due to time limitations. However, this limitation did not negatively affect the quality and validity of the study because the people interviewed were practitioners in Karanga Traditional religious practices, and the data, which they provided were representative of the death rituals performed by the Karanga of Nyajena. Furthermore, this researcher ethnically

belongs to the researched people, and had participated in, and observed many of the rituals under investigation, prior to this study. Even though the researcher tried to avoid being influenced by the ritual knowledge acquired prior to the fieldwork for this report, that information made it easier for the researcher to analyze and understand what the interviewees said or did.

Postcolonial theory provided the theoretical or philosophical worldview or assumptions through which death rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena were explored in this study. According to Hall (1996: 246), postcolonial refers to a “descriptive,” and “not evaluative process,” of detachment from the multi-faceted and inescapable “colonial syndrome,” which affects all the people of former colonized countries. It admits that the colonial created a new hybrid culture that continues to live in its “aftereffects,” (Hall, 1996: 248). In other words, colonialists demonized African cultures, and tried to replace them with Western cultures, to the extent that, even long after the political decolonization of Africa, many Africans are still suffering from the aftermath of that dehumanization and subjugation, and are struggling to reclaim and reaffirm their cultural identities as Africans. In this study, postcolonial theory was used to explore the Karanga death rituals to identify how they were practiced in the past, their significance, then and now, and the changes that have occurred in their performance. These inevitable changes were ushered by their encounter with the cultures of the colonialists, and of course, the cultural dynamism found in every society. This study encourages the Karanga to reclaim, reaffirm, and practice their death rituals.

7.3 SUMMARIES OF CHAPTERS 1–7

The report of this study was divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 gave the overall orientation of the study, and was divided into four sections. The first section of the chapter introduced the study from a general point of view. The second section explored the methodological framework by which data were collected and analyzed, and the philosophical perspective through which the Karanga death rituals were investigated and interpreted. The third section of the chapter dealt with the qualitative research data collection methods that were employed, such as interviews and participant observation. It also dealt with sampling, data analysis, data verification, and ethical considerations. The fourth section defined and clarified the key terms and concepts used in this study such as ritual, social change, death, and so on. All in all, chapter 1 included an abstract, research problem and question, the context of the research problem, justification, aims and objectives of the study, qualitative research method, and the philosophical perspective through which the topic under investigation was approached.

Chapter 2 was a review of the available literature on the causes of sickness and death among the Karanga of Nyajena in particular, and the Shona and other African people in general. In most natural cases, sickness precedes death, and consequently, to understand Karanga death rituals, one needs to delve into the Karanga's understanding of its causes. Even where death is a result of an accident or murder, the Karanga usually accuse some mysterious powers such as witchcraft or spirits, as the ultimate cause of that accident or murder. The causes of sickness and death that this chapter explored were witchcraft, evil spirits, familiars (*zvidhoma*), ancestors, avenging spirits (*ngozi*), alien spirits, and God.

Chapter 3 continued with the literature review that had started in chapter 2. While chapter 2 focused on causes of sickness and death among the African peoples in general and Karanga in particular, chapter 3 dealt with Shona death rituals as recorded in the available literature. This exploration went beyond the boundaries of Nyajena and Zimbabwe. Among the Karanga, just like among most African peoples, death is a solemn event that is marked by rituals that must be meticulously performed. The type of the appropriate ritual to be performed is influenced by the age, sex, or status of the person who is being buried. The chapter probed the Karanga rituals for the deceased at different stages in human development, such as fetuses, babies, single people, married adults, chiefs, people dying away from home, foreigners without relatives, and old people.

Chapter 3 also described the types and significance of death rituals that the Karanga of Nyajena and other Shona ethnicities perform. As has already been mentioned above, the death rituals were divided into three basic categories, namely, pre-burial, burial, and post-burial rituals. Pre-burial rituals included rituals such as folding of hands and legs, the closing of eyes, the onset of mourning, singing, dancing, the ritual goat (goat of *nhevedzo*), ritual donation (*chema*), washing and clothing the corpse, and food. The burial rituals involved marking the grave, digging the grave, carrying stones, carrying the corpse to the grave, placing the body and items into the grave, sweeping around the grave, speeches, and the cleansing of the gravediggers. Post-burial rituals included rituals such as days of rest, consulting about the cause of death, distribution of personal property, cleansing of the tools, and so on.

Chapter 4 was an analysis of the research findings on causes of sickness and death, pre-burial, and burial rituals. The chapter was divided into three sections. The first section dealt with causes of sickness and death. This section briefly explored the causes and the cultural changes that have taken place. The causes were first summarized in a table, and then presented in detail in a narrative. This section acted as a prelude to the second and third sections, which dealt with pre-burial and burial rituals by providing summarized tables of the rituals, their significance, and the cultural changes that have happened. The tables were then followed by detailed narratives of the rituals and their significance. The narrative of the described rituals had three parts, namely, the praxis of the ritual, significance, and the cultural changes that have been experienced by the participants.

The third section of chapter 4 dealt with Karanga burial rituals, and it took the format of the second section. It should be noted that the research findings reported in both chapter 4 and 5 included the observations of one funeral and one *magadziro* (making of an ancestor) by this researcher. Both the summaries and narratives were synthesized from the data collected from the participants and the observations made. Where necessary, the pseudonym of the participant was mentioned, particularly when the information reported was exceptional or had been affirmed or contested by other participants. It should be noted that chapters 4 and 5 dealt with fieldwork research findings, though, where necessary, some published researchers were quoted to bolster or contrast a view that was offered by the participants.

Chapter 5 was a continuation of the presentation of research findings that had started in chapter 4, and it explored the fourth theme—post-burial rituals. Chapter 5 began by giving a table, which

summarized the sub-themes of post-burial rituals. The table was followed by a detailed description of the praxis (sub-themes) and significance of the sub-themes, which were explored simultaneously, and in some places, one after the other. The last section of the chapter explored the category of cultural changes that have occurred to some of these rituals.

The information in chapters 4 and 5 was gathered through interviews and the observation of the people of Nyajena. As has been mentioned in chapter 4, the researcher attended one burial and one *magadziro* ceremony. Although more rituals could have been observed, the respondents had most of the information that the researcher needed, and they were almost always in concurrence concerning the praxis of such rituals.

Chapter 6 provided a brief manual for some selected death rituals from the time a person dies until the *magadziro* ceremony is performed. As a manual, this chapter is a series of clear and progressive instructions about how to perform the death rituals in question. The purpose of this chapter was to provide readers with step by step, pocketable, intelligible, easy to follow, and practical information about how to perform certain death rituals. The chapter attempted to give a brief, logical, practical synthesis, and application of the research findings of this study.

Chapter 7 (this chapter) concluded this report. It gave summaries of the overall orientation, methodological issues, philosophical framework, and the chapters included in the write-up of this study. It ended up by making recommendations for the way forward. It should be noted that the recommendations were offered as suggestions, and not as catechetical truths to be believed at the exclusion of other perspectives.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Human beings are not born with a culture, even though they are born within a culture. Hence, culture is a learned behavior, which children acquire as they grow up through the process of enculturation or socialization. In the early stages of children's development, most of the culture is imparted upon them by the significant others, and later, by peers and teachers. Since culture is an acquired trait, it can be forgotten if not practiced, or distorted if abused. It is also equally true that culture is dynamic, as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (2000: 28) observed; "Indeed, it would be a mistake to regard any culture as fixed and immutable. All cultures are in constant processes of change as their members seek new ways to address individual and group needs and as they encounter new situations and other cultures." To a certain extent, cultural change is a positive development, which may benefit the people who uphold that culture. However, cultural change becomes undesirable when instigated by another culture, which claims superiority over the receiving culture. More so, imposed cultural change becomes detrimental to a people's cultural identity and integrity, and therefore, unacceptable, particularly when it is achieved through the demonization of those cultures erroneously considered inferior.

This study has shown that the Karanga in particular, and Africans in general, while learning from others, as they have been doing for decades, have their own death rituals, which they should observe for the sake of maintaining cultural identity. Their rituals may be different from other people's, but that does not mean that they are culturally inferior to others. It is a fact that Africans had their own death rituals before the arrival of colonialists. It is also a fact that those

death rituals were replete with meaning to them. They helped them make sense of human finitude, and the life in the hereafter.

Although it is true that culture is dynamic, that dynamism should not be at the expense of a people's identity. If Africans want to change their death rituals, it should not be a result of being demonized or belittled by Western cultures. It should be a result of their desire to do so. Below, are suggestions about how those Karanga who have deliberately or unconsciously lost their cultural or religious identity, can retrace their footsteps back to who they are. The suggestions are also intended to strengthen those Karanga who still hold on to some or all of their death rituals by providing them with the information and a manual that they can use to refresh their memories.

7.4.1 Equality of all Cultures

After embarking on a study of this nature, one of the things that should be emphasized is that all cultures are equal though different. Since all cultures are equal, every culture deserves to be preserved and respected. According to Law (1993: 4), a culture is neither good nor bad, but different, and the people who fail to grasp this point suffer from ethnocentricity, which he defines as a belief that one's cultural way of doing things is the only right one. Ethnocentrism creates a cultural superiority complex, which is likely to blind the one suffering from it from seeing the beauty in other cultures. During the colonization of Africa by Westerners, this superiority complex caused colonialists to condemn most African cultural practices and beliefs, and engendered relentless attempts and brutal measures to replace them with Western cultures. The USCCB (2018: 9) insightfully writes, "The truth that we must face is straight forward. When

one culture meets another, lack of awareness and understanding often leads to grossly distorted value judgments and prejudice,” which may fuel attitudes of superiority in the people belonging to the imperialistic culture, and inferiority in the oppressed people.

Unless each ethnicity stands its ground in affirming and preserving the integrity of its culture, some cultural aspects of that ethnical group are going to be demeaned or even lost. Each ethnic group should be proud of its religious or cultural practices and beliefs. Although culture is dynamic, every culture should maintain some cultural constants, which should be passed on to future generations. A people that loses its culture, also loses its cultural identity. Without a cultural identity, humanity becomes alienated from the source of its vitality. Hence, it is important for African traditional leaders, and those members of the communities that still have the knowhow of performing traditional death rituals to preserve and pass them on to the next generations.

African leaders should try to reignite cultural pride in Africans so that they may realize that there is nothing wrong with their cultural worldview. The acquisition of African cultural identity may lead to African pride and confidence. This African pride and confidence will encourage Africans to invent their own technology and to pursue their own educational endeavors, instead of imitating the West in everything. It should be noted that the acquisition of cultural pride and confidence comes from a strong conviction that all cultures are equal, although different, and that, not culture is superior or inferior to the other.

7.4.2 Death Rituals are Crucial.

Death rituals, though they may differ from one culture to another, are crucial for the people who perform them, and are equally important. There is no culture that possesses superior death rituals, for all rituals serve the purpose for which they were formulated. They initiate the deceased into the ancestral or spiritual world, and also help the surviving family members cope with grief. Every ethnical group should know how to perform its own rituals flawlessly so that the deceased members of the family are not deprived of the fullness of life in the invisible world.

This study found out that, although the Karanga of Nyajena still practice some of their traditional death rituals, particularly pre-burial and burial rituals, there is a general neglect of the post-burial rituals. For instance, most people have stopped performing the *magadziro* ceremony, which is intended to reincorporate the spirit of the deceased back into the family. Failure to incorporate the deceased back into the family is tantamount to depriving them of their right to a complete process of dying and living. According to Bullock (1927: 266), unless the *magadziro* ritual is performed, the wandering spirit of the deceased cannot be “admitted into the company of family spirits.” Hence, the failure to perform *magadziro* is tantamount to the excommunication and ostracization of the deceased family member. It is an abuse of the power the living members of a family do have. A deprivation of this kind aggravates all ancestors, and there are serious repercussions for that. Ancestors cannot allow that neglect go unpunished.

7.4.3 Karanga Death Rituals have Changed.

It is true that many Karanga death rituals have changed because of acculturation, and this changing face of rituals is likely to continue. Some of these changes are positive, while others are

negative. Gittins (2015: 59) equates acculturation (encounter between two or more cultures) to blood transfusion, which can be life “enhancing—or death dealing,” for there is always a potential or danger of either of the cultures being overpowered and trashed. Once a culture is overpowered by the other, like what happened to most African cultures due to colonialism, its rituals are likely to be condemned and discarded. The acceptance of that condemnation by the colonized leads to cultural self-depreciation, which some people are likely to internalize. A person who suffers from cultural self-depreciation tries by all means to run away from her own culture by imitating the other culture. Sometimes, such people become frustrated when they experience a repulsion by the cultures that they have adopted at the expense of their own.

The Karanga need to be encouraged to embrace the positive and inevitable ritual changes that were brought about by their encounter with other religions and cultures of the world. However, any negative change that is aimed at belittling and demeaning some Karanga death rituals should be shunned, for it robs them of their cultural heritage and identity as a people. The Karanga should know how death rituals were performed in the past, their significance, and the changes that have occurred. They say, “knowledge is power.” The knowledge of the traditional death rituals will enable them to choose how they want to honor their deceased members of the family. This choice between modern and traditional rituals can only be possible if the Karanga have both versions of the rituals—the old and the new. On the one hand, they should embrace the positive changes, and on the other hand, they should guard against negative foreign cultural influences that rob them of their cultural identity and integrity.

7.4.4 Let Them Write Down Their Rituals

Although oral traditions have their own advantages as has been mentioned above, they also have serious setbacks. The surest way to preserve the Karanga death rituals for posterity is to write them down. That which has been written down though it becomes rigid, it cannot be altered or even forgotten. Both the praxis and significance of Karanga death rituals should be recorded and archived lest the next generations forget them. It is true that the flexibility, which these rituals have enjoyed up to now will be lost through writing, but it is better that way.

One of the objectives of this study was to compose a death ritual manual for the Karanga of Nyajena. Even though the manual that was produced is not exhaustive, it remains a significant foundation on which other researchers may build. If all the Shona ethnicities were to write down their death rituals, people would have a compendium of such rituals from which those who choose to bury their dead according to their own rituals can draw. It is true that some of the rituals have been distorted, but it is never too late to do something about it. Whatever can be salvaged from what still exists, should be embraced and magnified.

7.4.5 Encouraging Dying at Home

The social reality that most ill Karanga people seek treatment at modern hospitals cannot be denied or even discouraged because many times, patients are cured of their illnesses there. However, for every patient, a time comes when the Western healthcare system fails to cure his illness, and the patient is discharged from hospital to receive palliative care at home. To be discharged from hospital means that the Western healthcare system would have done everything in its power to restore the patient's health back to its normal position to no avail, and now

suggests that the best option available for the patient is to receive pain management at home, while waiting for the “moment of truth”—death. The relatives of the dying person should be encouraged to accept that moment of truth, by taking their relative home, and rendering him the best care they can at home. That way they may be able to deal with his final moments and death wishes from a cultural point of view.

At home, the relatives of the dying person can perform the Karanga death rituals without being discouraged by the Western healthcare workers. Also, at home one dies surrounded by his family members, if available. In addition to that, dying at home reduces transport costs of ferrying the corpse from the hospital to the rural home, if the burial is to take place there. If the deceased would be buried in an urban cemetery, his urban home, if he has any, is also a good place to die at. Furthermore, dying at home ensures early burial, thereby preventing the patient from being embalmed. As has been discussed in preceding chapters, despite the many advantages of embalmment, there are also disadvantages. One of the disadvantages of embalmment is that it interferes with the natural way of body decomposition, which in turn may affect one’s ancestorhood. One of the reasons for performing the *magadziro* ceremony, at least six months after one’s burial is to allow the body to decompose so that the ancestor does not come back home with a human body. If that happens, he would be more of a ghost than an ancestor. Now, with embalmment, the body may go for years before decomposition, which may interfere with the deceased’s becoming an ancestor. Embalmment can be avoided if there is an early burial of the deceased lest the body decomposes before burial. Early burial is possible if the person dies closer to the burial place. People with terminal illnesses should be allowed or even encouraged to die at home as long as there are people to care for them and to manage their pain.

7.4.6 Gathering for Burial Early

The Karanga should encourage the close family members of the dying person, if death is anticipated, to gather at the home of the patient or be in the vicinity before the onset of death. This early gathering will allow people to be present when their beloved one dies. Some of the participants in this study mentioned that some people would delay dying if the family member that they love most has not yet visited them. This early gathering of relatives may facilitate the early burial of the deceased.

However, for the relatives to be able to gather before the demise of their ill family member, there should be people who can sense the proximity of death so that they can alert others. Since some of the relatives work in places far away from home, the family may not be able to wait for them to attend the funeral since the body would become bad unless it is embalmed. This long waiting can only be prevented if all the close family members gather at the home of the dying person just before his demise. The timely gathering of relatives just before death can only be possible if some of the caregivers at home can sense the impending death. Therefore, there is a need to train people concerning the signs of the coming of death, and how to care for the terminally ill.

7.4.7 Educating the Youth about Death Rituals

If the Karanga death rituals are to survive acculturation, the elders should pass them on to the younger generations. There should be a deliberate move by the ritual practitioners and family leaders to educate the youth. Even though some schools in Zimbabwe include culture and religious studies in their curriculum, not enough is done. Until recently, the only religious tradition that was studied in Zimbabwean schools in detail was Christianity, not African

Traditional Religion, which shows the cultural self-depreciation, which was championed by colonialists, from which Zimbabweans have failed to free themselves ever since they attained their independence from Britain in 1980.

Rituals leaders should complement the efforts of the schools by encouraging the youth to visit dying relatives, and attending burials. The youths that attend burials should be encouraged to ask questions or even be offered unsolicited for information about the proceedings. For instance, the ritual leader or master of ceremony should explain the significance and importance of the rituals being carried out. For example, when the time to bring the stones to the grave comes, the leader may say, “Now it’s time for some of us to go and fetch the rocks that we will use to seal the grave mount. We have to use these rocks to prevent wild animals and witches from digging up the grave. When you carry the stones, please, make sure to carry only one at a time. There are repercussions for carrying two rocks at the same time. First, if the spirit of the deceased is angered and decide to come back home to punish us, two persons would die at the same time. Second, if the deceased’s spirit is defiled and decide to turn against us, it may bring another spirit to fight us. Now instead of facing the wrath of only one spirit, we would face the anger of two.”

Explaining the praxis and significance of every death ritual would educate the youth about the ritual process and the meaning of the rituals that are performed. If the ritual leader has forgotten the meaning or significance of a particular ritual, he may ask any of the elders gathered to explain it to the gathering. These young people would then pass the knowledge to their own children, and as a result, everyone would have the knowledge of what to do, how to do it, and

why doing it. This would be practical education as opposed to theoretical learning gained at school.

7.5 CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that the Karanga of Nyajena in particular, and the African people in general, have lost some of their rituals because of their encounter with other cultures. However, there still exist people who know the praxis, even though some of them have forgotten the significance of some of the death rituals. There are also Africans that have lost their cultural identity. In fact, some of them openly denounce their own culture. However, this study has shown that there are many death rituals that the Karanga people still know, and even practice. Each community is blessed with a member or more, who are the custodians of the undying memories of the Karanga death rituals. Before all these ritual practitioners are gone, whatever information that they do have should be written down and preserved. It is not too late for the Karanga of Nyajena to go back to their traditions and gather up the pieces. The Karanga should reclaim their cultural identity so that they are counted among the cultures of the world.

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ADDENDUM A

LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPANT’S PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND ARABIC

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Date:

Title: *Death Rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena, Zimbabwe: Praxis, Significance, and Changes*

Dear:.....(Research Participant)

My name is Dr. **John Chitakure** and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr. Elijah Elijah Ngoweni Dube, a lecturer, in the Department of Religious Studies and Arabic towards a PhD in Religious Studies at the University of South Africa. I will fund the research from personal income. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *Death Rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena, Zimbabwe: Praxis, Significance, and Changes*.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose statement of a study indicates why a researcher wants to conduct the study and what he intends to accomplish by so doing (Creswell and Creswell, 2018: 117). It has also been defined as a “road map” to the whole study (Creswell and Poth, 2018:326). In addition to that, “a good qualitative purpose statement contains information about the central phenomenon explored in the study, the participants in the study, and the research site (Creswell, 2009: 112). The purpose of

this study is to explore the Karanga death rituals with the intent to know them, understand their significance, identify any changes that might have occurred, and to provide a resource to the people who would like to bury their beloved ones according to the Karanga traditional way. The availability of such a death rituals rubric will inculcate some appreciation and knowledge of how to perform the rituals, since they are crucial for the future of both the deceased persons' spirits and the living members of their families. This knowledge is likely to empower posterity in safeguarding the rituals against extinction, and encouraging young generations to uphold them. The Karanga death rituals will be explored under three categories: pre-burial rituals, burial rituals, and post-burial rituals. The study will use qualitative research particularly ethnography to explore these rituals. Participants will be selected for their expertise and experience in Karanga death rituals. The study will use the convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling in identifying the participants. The researcher will visit the respondents in their own homes or workplaces to either interview or observe them. It should be noted that this study will be limited to the Karanga of Nyajena, in Masvingo.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are being chosen to participate in this research because of several reasons. First, you are an elder who has participated in several Karanga death rituals, and consequently, it is presumed that your experiences have enabled you to acquire the treasured knowledge and wisdom concerning the Karanga death rituals. Second, by virtue of your age, you are considered a sacred practitioner in Karanga religious beliefs, and as such you are a repository of the Karanga traditional knowledge. Third, you are a traditional leader in one of the Nyajena villages, and because of that you are already a sacred practitioner of the traditional rituals that we are studying. I got your contact details from your village head, and other people, who recommended you because of your knowledge of the traditions of the Karanga people. This research intends to consult a small sample of twenty interviewees, and you will be one of them.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves audio taping, semi-structured interviews, questionnaire, note taking by researcher, and formal and informal interviews. The participants will be asked to list and describe the Karanga death rituals that they know about. As they describe the rituals, they may be asked questions as to the significance of some of the aspects of their narratives. For instance, how were infants who died at birth buried? Why were they buried like that? How were adults buried? What were the rituals performed from the time one was sick until the ritual of *kugadzira* (cleansing ceremony) was performed? Has anything changed? If yes, what has changed, and how? The questions will be formatted as follows:

1. Description of a particular death ritual;
2. Significance of the ritual or some aspects of it; and,
3. What would have changed.

The interview will last not more than one forty-five minutes. This time includes the time spent on answering semi-structured, and descriptions of the rituals. The participant will be asked to complete a questionnaire first, which will last for about ten minutes, and will then move on to the narration of particular rituals with the guidance of the researcher. The participant and the researcher will also be engaged in a conversation which will be recorded, or notes taken.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and there are no benefits of participating or not participating. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. In terms of audio interviews, the participant may choose to withdraw from the interview at any time during the interview, and before the material would have already been used in the thesis. However, participants cannot withdraw from this research project at any time where non-identifiable material such as questionnaires has been supplied. In this case, it will not be possible to withdraw once the participant has submitted the questionnaire because the information supplied

cannot be identified with a particular person or group of persons. Please note that this will depend on the nature of the questionnaire. Where the questionnaire indicates the identity of the participant, but the researcher may have agreed to anonymize personal data, the withdrawal is possible.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefits of this study are: 1. The participant will have an opportunity to share his or her knowledge of the rituals; 2. The community will have an opportunity to reflect on the changes, if any, to the rituals; and, 3. The community will have a record of its death rituals for posterity.

However, the participant should know that his/her taking part in this research is voluntary, and there are no material benefits offered for participation. The researcher may accept gifts such as water and food, and likewise may offer gifts in turn as he deems necessary, and only if available. This reciprocity of gifts should never be understood as material benefits for participation in the project, but as a sign of Karanga hospitality.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Although, the risks of participating in this study are minimal, if any at all, the research concerns narratives of death rituals that the participant can remember, and this has its own challenges. First, the researcher is aware that discussing death may invoke sad memories of the beloved ones who would have died in the family of the participant. If that happens, and it is severe according to the researcher's judgment, the researcher would refer the participant to traditional counsellors. Since the researcher has been trained as a Clinical Pastoral Education chaplain, he may be able to identify those interviewees who are still in mourning, and take appropriate action. In addition to that, the duration of the interview may be too long for some participants. To counteract this problem, at any stage of the interview, the participant should feel free to stop the interview. Finally, there is a danger that the participant may be identified by some of the villagers. To prevent that from happening, the participant may ask for anonymity during the interview, and a pseudonym can be used.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The participant should know that his/her identity may be kept confidential if necessary.

She/he has the right to instruct the researcher that his or her name should not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about his/her involvement in this research. The participant's name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect the answers to him/her give. Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, and any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the supervisor and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

You should know that your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in San Antonio, Texas, USA for future research or academic purposes. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After a period of five years hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Since the researcher is receiving no funding from anybody or institution, participating in this study is on a voluntary basis, and there will be no monetary benefits in participating. However, the researcher will accept gifts such as water, food, and any other hospitality that is customarily offered for free, and will reciprocate such hospitality as he deems appropriate, and as permitted by the availability of resources.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of The College of Human Sciences, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Dr. John Chitakure, on (210) 396-5160, or 63467445@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for a year.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Elijah Elijah Ngoweni Dube, dubeeen@unisa.ac.za (012) 429 3892.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.
Thank you.

Date: _____

John Chitakure (Student Number: 63467445)

ADDENDUM B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview, and I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher's Name: _____ **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

ADDENDUM C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name of Student: John Chitakure (63467445)

Title: Death Rituals among the Karanga of Nyajena, Zimbabwe: Praxis, Significance, and Changes

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What were or are the Karanga death rituals as practiced by the Karanga of Nyajena?
2. What were or are their significance to the people of Nyajena? 3.
3. Are there any changes in the practice and understanding of these rituals?

DETAILED QUESTIONS

Pre-burial Rituals

1. Describe the Karanga traditional causes of sickness and death?
2. Describe the Karanga pre-burial rituals that were/are performed from the time someone is terminally ill up to just before the corpse is taken out for burial.
3. What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?
4. Has any of these rituals changed?

Burial Rituals

1. Describe the Karanga burial rituals, from the time the body is carried out from the house for burial until it is finally buried.
2. What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?
3. Has any of these rituals changed?

Post-burial Rituals

1. Describe the Karanga post-burial rituals?
2. What do the described rituals signify to you and your community?
3. Has any of these rituals changed?

Researcher: John Chitakure

Date: February 2019

Supervisor:_____ **Date:**_____